



STOREFRONT GUIDELINES



JUNE 2020



STRENGTHENING BUSINESS,
BUILDING COMMUNITY.



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INTRODUCTION

An ideal Rogers Park offers diverse businesses, arts, cultural and recreational activities, good schools, safe streets, excellent transportation and sustainable practices for all of its residents and visitors. As a business and/or property owner, you play a significant role in making this vision a reality for Rogers Park. These Storefront Design Guidelines are one step on the path toward achieving our shared goal.

Rogers Park Business Alliance developed these guidelines as a resource and inspiration for business and/or property owners to ensure that good design is part of retail storefront plans. It includes City of Chicago requirements for signage, awnings, windows, façade, exterior, lighting, permitting and zoning along with information about how we can assist you in financing your storefront design upgrades. By following the guidelines presented here and adding unique elements that emphasize what is special about the business behind the storefront, you will draw attention to your business while creating an environment that attracts customers and encourages people to linger in the area.

Data shows that commercial streets that have a distinctive character appeal to shoppers and diners and are more successful. Even a small investment in the exterior of a property has measurable impacts on business sales as well as on the ability of a business to attract new customers. Recent reports show that 80% of businesses that invested in external property improvements saw an increase in the number of first-time customers, with an average of 10% more new customers. 90% of businesses that invested in external property improvements report increased overall sales, with an average increase of 20%.

Rogers Park Business Alliance invites you to use these Storefront Design Guidelines and to work with us to cultivate and sustain a thriving economic environment in Rogers Park. Through proactive planning and targeted investment, we are confident that your storefront improvement project will strengthen and invigorate our community. We are pleased to partner with you to provide you with the technical and financial assistance you need to improve your storefront. Thank you for being a business and property owner in Rogers Park. Together we will strengthen business and build community!

10 STOREFRONT DESIGN TIPS

1 AVOID CLUTTER

Simple design conveys a strong brand - avoid overwhelming customers with too much text / clutter. It is recommended to leave clear lines of sight between the business and the sidewalk to enhance attractiveness of the storefront and improve safety for the business, customers and pedestrians.

2 QUALITY NOT QUANTITY

Materials used should be high-quality and durable. Low-cost materials tend to break down quickly which require frequent replacement or a shoddy look, deterring potential customers.

Traditional materials such as wood, metal, glass, canvas, stone, brick, etc. are encouraged.

3 GATES = UNSAFE IMAGE

Clear windows allow pedestrians to window shop, during the day and night and discourages graffiti. It is recommended that businesses avoid the use of security gates that make the corridor seem unsafe. If necessary, open-mesh security gates on the interior provide greater visual access and will not be subject to graffiti.

4 KNOW WHO YOU ARE HIRING

All storefront improvements must be performed by contractors licensed by the City of Chicago. Choosing a reputable contractor and ensuring that they are aware of City of Chicago regulations will help you avoid unnecessary fines and delays.

5 MAINTAIN & GAIN

Keep your windows clean and your signs and awnings in good repair. A fresh coat of paint is a good investment. Proper maintenance goes a long way and in the end will help your bottom line.

6 REPAIR RATHER THAN REPLACE

To the extent possible, improvements should be designed to reveal the building's original architectural style, form and materials. Sometimes simply stripping the covering away reveals beautiful detailing that will draw attention to your store.

7 HONOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

Think about what makes your location unique. Complement the distinctive character of your commercial district to create a sense of place that draws more people to the neighborhood.

9 ADHERE TO THE RULES

All improvements must comply with applicable regulations, permit requirements and City of Chicago zoning codes.

8 ENLIVEN, INVITE AND LIGHT

It is encouraged to use interior lighting after business hours to enliven the corridor and boost security on the street. Ample lighting draws attention and brings in more customers. Avoid neon or bright track lighting, for they distract from your store's brand, they do not make the storefront more enticing and neighbors find it unappealing.

10 REMEMBER!

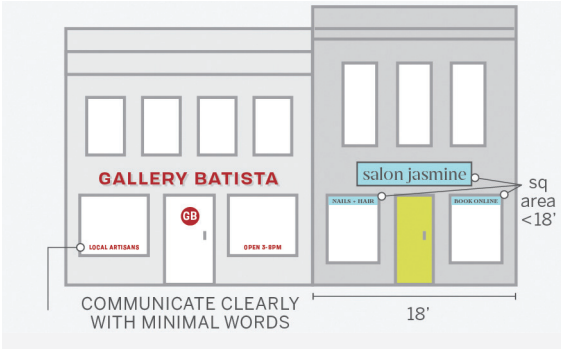
Follow the City's regulations, maintain the integrity of the fabric of Rogers Park and keep it simple!

signs

Signs are typically one of the first things your customer will notice about your storefront. Good signs provide customers with basic information about your business and showcase its quality and personality. Effective signs compliment the building and neighborhood. Typically, simple signs are more effective than cluttered ones – if it is too cluttered, customers won't read it.

REGULATIONS

- Total maximum sign area is 3x street frontage or up to 600 sq. ft.
- Signs must not flare higher than the second floor.
- Video display and flashing signs are prohibited.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Signs are advertisements meant to showcase your business - not to describe all services that your business offers.
- Avoid flashing signs or signs with excessive lighting
- Simple neon signs can be effective.
- Remove old or non-functioning signs and frames.
- Where possible, reuse or restore historic signs.
- Keep text and visuals to a minimum.

PERMITS

A permit is required from the City of Chicago's Department of Buildings for the installation of all signs, EXCEPT for signs made entirely of paper, film, sticker, or vinyl that will be displayed for less than 60 days in a window and take up less than 25% of the window space, including painted signs. Incidental signs stating address, hours of operation or open/close do NOT need a permit - UNLESS the sign also contains a business name, slogan or logo.

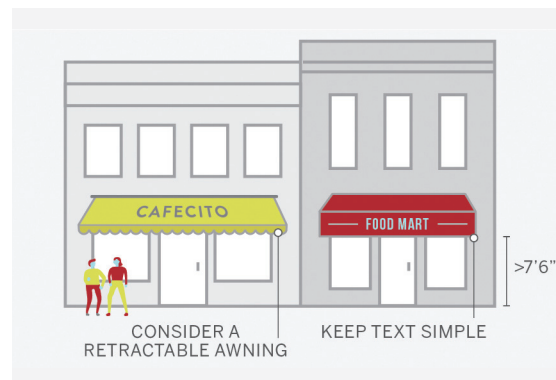


awnings

Awnings offer your storefront protection from the elements and shade to your customers and they also provide so much more! Tidy awnings signal professionalism and cleanliness to potential customers. In general, it is best to have awnings with limited text – impactful awnings typically feature the store’s name, phone number, and one or two other key pieces of information.

REGULATIONS

- Awnings must be at least 7 feet, 6 inches above the sidewalk.
- Awnings shall not extend into the public way a greater distance than within 18 inches (457 mm) of the curb line.
- Awnings cannot be internally lit.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Keep text to a minimum and keep color schemes simple and on-brand – just like signage, concise branding helps your business stand out.
- Where possible, important architectural features should not be blocked by awnings.
- Remove old or weathered awnings.
- Consider a retractable awning, which has a longer lifespan than a fixed awning.



windows

Clean windows attract customers to any type of business, either by allowing them to preview goods and services or by conveying the brand. Customers respond favorably to clean windows with simple signage – it is important not to clutter windows with excessive advertising or decorations.

REGULATIONS

- A minimum of 60% of the street-facing building façade between 4 feet and 10 feet in height must be comprised of clear, non-reflective windows that allow views of indoor commercial space or product display areas.
- The bottom of any window or product display window used to satisfy this requirement may not be more than 4.5 feet above the adjacent sidewalk. Product display windows used to satisfy these requirements must have a minimum height of 4 feet and be internally lit.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Windows should not be covered with posters, advertisements or decorations.
- Accentuate windows with signage of appropriate size.
- Subtle signs attract customers better than loud signs.
- Maximum transparency allows customers to preview goods and services.
- Signage can be painted directly on window surface.
- Maintain overall historic pattern of windows and columns.

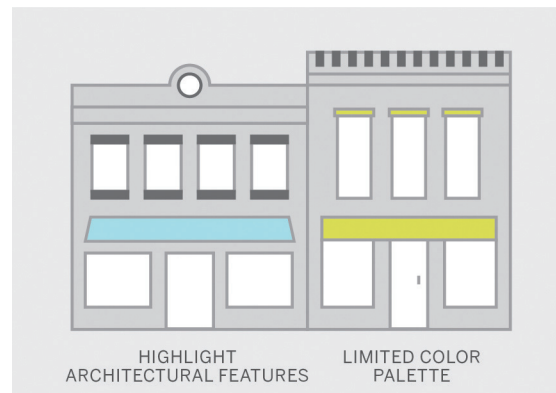


façade & exterior

Appealing exteriors can be built in buildings of any age. In fact, many buildings feature interesting architectural features that are not being leveraged. By working with existing architecture, business owners can create simple yet elegant exteriors that attract customers and project an elegant brand.

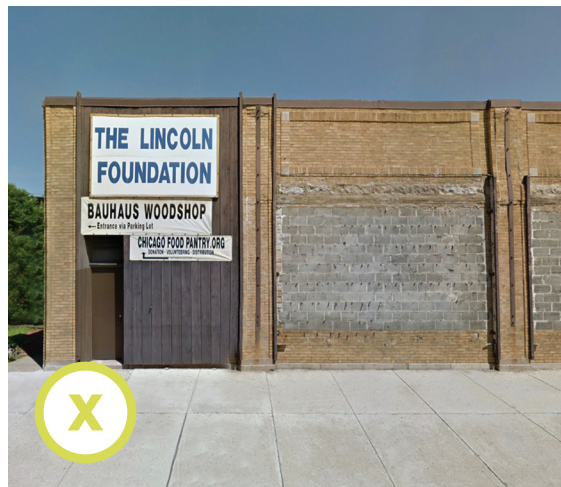
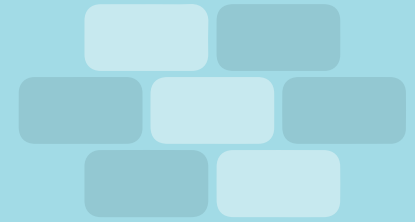
REGULATIONS

- A minimum of 60% of the street-facing building façade between 4 feet and 10 feet in height must be comprised of clear, non-reflective windows that allow views of indoor commercial space or product display areas. This standard applies to building façades that face pedestrian streets.



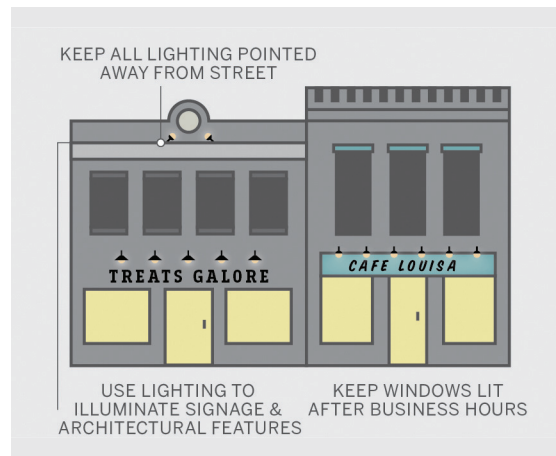
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Work with existing architectural features – note that they may be covered up or underutilized!
- Use color sparingly to make the building façade stand out.
- Even in eye-catching paint schemes, refrain from using more than two or three colors.
- Use masonry, terra cotta and quality tuck-pointing, and match mortar color with brick.
- Do not sandblast masonry; use other, gentler cleaning methods.
- Keep it simple!



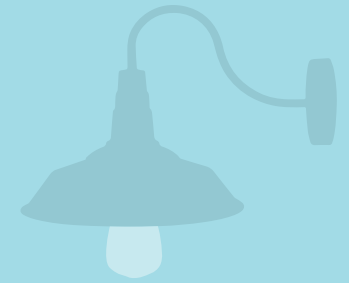
lighting

Lighting attracts customers and helps protect stores from crime. However, lighting is most effective when it is subtle and understated. Although flashing, neon, or other bright lights can attract attention when used in moderation, excessive use of this lighting is unlikely to result in increased foot traffic.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Use energy efficient LED lighting instead of sodium and mercury vapor lights or fluorescent strip lights.
- Light signage and the sidewalk in front of the storefront to attract attention and deter crime.
- Use neon sparingly, it is as effective as small window signage, not as a main focus of the storefront – historic neon can also be effective.
- "Goose-neck" lighting or other fixture lighting (examples on the next page) are recommended.
- Ensure intensity is level across all lighting.
- Use internal lighting in windows where possible.



PERMITS & ZONING

Business and property owners are strongly advised to consult the City of Chicago's Zoning Ordinance Code and obtain a permit PRIOR to ordering or purchase of any storefront façade equipment.

WWW.CITYOFCHICAGO.ORG

- Sign Regulations: Ch. 17-12
- Awning Regulations: Ch. 17-12
- Storefront Window Displays: Ch. 17-3
- Lighting and Landscaping: Ch. 17-11/12

BUILDING AND ELECTRICAL PERMITS

The City of Chicago requires Building Permits for most repair work and additions or alterations to a building. An electrical permit from the Chicago Department of Buildings is required for electrical works such as exterior light fixtures or neon signs.

City of Chicago Department of Buildings

City Hall, Room 900
121 N. LaSalle Street
Chicago, IL 60602
312.744.3449

www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/bldgs.html

SIGNS AND AWNINGS

A Public Way Use Permit application from the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection must be completed, if the proposed sign or awning will extend from the property line over the public right of way.

All signage must be installed by a sign erector company that is registered and bonded with the City of Chicago Department of Buildings. Permits need to be signed by the local Alderperson.

Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection – Public Way Use Unit

City Hall, Room 800
121 N. LaSalle Street
312.744.6060
Chicago, IL 60602

www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/bacp/provdrs/public_way.html



CORRIDOR BRAND STANDARDS

Corridor brand standards are a set of guidelines for the colors, photography and graphic elements, logo specs, fonts and general messaging that together help to promote the corridor. They are the glue that holds a brand together and help to create and protect a specific corridor's brand identity.

We encourage business and/or property owners to reference their corridor's brand standards whenever possible to ensure consistency in messaging. Any collateral or design materials created foster a community connection to the brand and the corridor itself, and tell the corridor's story through words, text, images and other visual content.

Although your business brand standards are always a priority to maintain your business' identity, the inclusion of the corridor brand standards will help the community acquire a "sense of place" and continue to make Rogers Park a destination.

CLARK STREET

CLARK



the flavor of Rogers Park

The Clark Street boundaries extend from Devon to Touhy.

Access the Clark Street Brand Guide here:

<https://tinyurl.com/ClarkBrand>

HOWARD STREET



The Howard Street (SSA #19) boundaries include Howard from Ridge to Sheridan, Paulina from Rogers to Jonquil, Rogers from Greenview to Ashland and the Gateway Centre.

Access the Howard Street Brand Guide here:

<https://tinyurl.com/HowardBrand>

ROGERSEGE

ROGERS EDGE

The RogersEdge boundaries include Sheridan from Farwell to Devon, Broadway from Devon to Granville, Granville from Broadway to Kenmore, and Devon from Sheridan/Broadway to Glenwood.

Access the RogersEdge Brand Guide here:
<https://tinyurl.com/RogersEdgeBrand>

ON DEVON



The On Devon boundaries include Devon from Damen to Kedzie and Western from Arthur to Granville.

Access the On Devon Brand Guide here:
<https://tinyurl.com/OnDevonBrand>



FINANCING

SPECIAL SERVICE AREA (SSA) BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (BIP)

The Special Service Area (SSA) Business Improvement Program (BIP) provides incentives in the form of a rebate for physical improvements to storefronts and facades along the public way, within the boundaries of each respective SSA. The goal of the BIP is to beautify and revitalize commercial retail buildings, attract and retain businesses, enhance the streetscape and the character and qualities of the districts. The BIP is subject to the approval of, and administered locally by, Rogers Park Business Alliance, the SSA Sole Service Provider for Howard Street SSA #19, Clark/Morse/Glenwood SSA #24, Devon Avenue SSA #43 and Sheridan Road SSA #54. To receive a rebate business or property must be located within an SSA. Eligible applicants who plan to make storefront improvements are eligible for a rebate of up to 50% of the associated costs with a maximum rebate not to exceed \$5,000. Funding is limited – applications will be considered in the order in which they are received.

- For detailed information on the boundaries of the Special Service Areas in Rogers Park and West Ridge, visit: www.rpba.org/special-service-area
- Applications must be approved prior to beginning the project. If construction or other work on a project has begun, prior to application submission and approval, the project will not be eligible for a rebate.
- Projects must follow the guidelines presented in this document and are subject to review by the SSA Commissions.
- For BIP application and a list of eligible and ineligible improvements, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/BIPENGLISH>



SMALL BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT FUND (SBIF)

The City of Chicago's Small Business Improvement Fund (SBIF) provides small businesses with financial assistance for building-improvement costs. SBIF grants use local Tax Increment Financing (TIF) revenue to reimburse the pre-approved repair or rehab of business facilities or adjacent land acquisition. Businesses or properties must be located within a SBIF eligible TIF district. The maximum grant assistance for an industrial property is \$150K; for a single-tenant commercial property the maximum is \$100K; and for multi-tenant commercial property the maximum is \$50K. Grant funds are provided after an approved project is complete and all expenses are paid.

For more information and TIF boundaries, visit:
www.somercor.com/sbif

RPBA IS A SMALL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY CENTER

Rogers Park Business Alliance (RPBA) is a Small Business Opportunity Center designated by the City of Chicago. We can assist with expert advice on small business loans from \$500 to \$500K, how to qualify for these loans and referrals to community banks and alternative lenders for entrepreneurs and existing business owners. RPBA will discuss with each client their particular funding needs and small business loan requirements in order to provide a referral to a lender.

For more information, visit: www.rpba.org/access-to-capital

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Rogers Park Business Alliance provides resources, technical assistance, training and other individualized support. For more information and to make an appointment call 773.508.5885 or email us at info@rpba.org.



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