

City of Albany Small Business Façade Improvement Program

Façade Design Principles

Human scale: Buildings should contribute to a commercial district environment of streets, plazas and parks that is particularly welcoming to people. Through human-scaled bays, windows, signage and other elements of architectural composition, facades should help make Albany a welcoming and comfortable place to experience on foot.

Active and observant ground floors: The programming and design of ground floors plays a particularly important role in making walking safe and convenient. Design should generally follow the example of traditional storefronts, with large amounts of transparent glass, frequent entrances, pedestrian-scaled signage, and, where feasible and permissible, outdoor dining or sales activity. In all cases, there should be ample opportunity for people indoors to have “eyes on the street” supporting actual and perceived pedestrian safety.

Historic compatibility: Albany’s exceptional collection of historic buildings should be preserved wherever possible, and original construction materials and details should be maintained and restored. Newer buildings can and should be distinct from historic buildings in their architectural design, but should also include design features that echo those in their historic surroundings, such as matching cornice heights, materials or proportions.

Variety in architectural composition: Albany’s buildings demonstrate an interesting and functional variety of height, shape and composition that should be maintained. This variety offers a number of benefits, such as landmarks that stand out in special places, an interesting skyline viewed from afar, buildings that suit the scales and sizes of a variety of uses, and good access to views and daylight from many floors.

Durable materials: Building façades should be built of durable materials such as stone or brick masonry, or metal.

Color consistency with context: Façade colors should be chosen to reflect traditional color schemes or otherwise be compatible with nearby buildings.

For more information, contact:

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