City of Rome

Downtown Commercial and Institutional Design Guidelines
Historic Commercial and Institutional Design Guidelines

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1. Introduction

Historic Preservation and Architectural Review guidelines are an important component of any community’s historic preservation program. These guidelines were developed to assist in decisions regarding changes within historic districts. They are intended to encourage orderly, creative, and compatible development within historic districts.

The objectives of these Design Guidelines are many:
1. By preserving the historic integrity of the historic districts, public and private investment will be protected;
2. The Guidelines will help to maintain the “sense of place” that distinguishes Rome and its environment;
3. Sensitive, compatible and appropriate renovations and new development will be encouraged to contribute to an existing well-established architectural heritage.

Historic Preservation in Rome
Rome’s first Historic Preservation Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 1979. Designation of neighborhoods to the National Register of Historic Places began in the 70’s and continues to the present time. Rome currently has nine districts designated on the National Register of Historic Places and three of them have been designated as local historic districts. A seven-member Historic Preservation Commission reviews exterior changes to buildings in the three local districts: Between the Rivers; Oakdene and Avenue A. The city of Rome became a Certified Local Government (CLG) in 1997 and is now eligible for increased funding for historic preservation. Rome’s first CLG grant was awarded in the Spring of 1998 to conduct a complete historic resources survey for the City.

Rome Historic Preservation Commission
This seven member Commission is made up of residents of Rome who are dedicated to the fields of architecture, history, landscape architecture, planning, and/or archaeology. As volunteers appointed by the City Commission, members hold office for a term of three years. The Commission meets monthly on the third Wednesday of the month at 12:30 in City Hall. Meetings are always open to the public, who are encouraged to attend and share in discussions. Work sessions or special meetings are called as necessary.
Financial Incentives for Downtown Rome

**FEDERAL**

*Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit (RITC):*
A 20% tax credit for the substantial rehabilitation of certified historic buildings for commercial, industrial, and rental residential purposes is available under current law. A 10% tax credit for some older structures, which do not qualify for certification, is also available. RITCs are available to owners and certain long-term renters of income-producing properties.

*Charitable Contribution Deduction:*
The charitable contribution deduction is taken in the form of a conservation easement and enables the owner of a “certified historic structure” to receive a one-time tax deduction. A conservation easement usually involves the preservation of a building’s façade by restricting the right to alter its appearance.

**STATE**

*Rehabilitated Historic Property Tax Assessment Freeze:*
This incentive program provides an eight year freeze on property tax assessments, followed by an assessment increase of 50% of the difference between the recorded first year value on historic properties which have undergone substantial rehabilitation. The property must be listed or eligible for listing on the Georgia Register of Historic Places or the National Register of Historic Places either individually or as a contributing building within a historic district.

*ARC Revolving Low Interest Loan Program*
A low interest loan program administered at the state level by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs based on the creation of jobs. The interest rates range from 4-7% and will depend on the financial strength of the borrower. Typically, a local banking institution will lend 50 percent of project cost, the owner will inject 10% equity, and the Low Interest Loan Program will fill the gap of 40%.

**LOCAL**

*Downtown Façade Reimbursement Program*
The Rome Downtown Development Authority initiated a program which offers funding to citizens interested in improving downtown building facades. The goals of the façade grant program are to improve building exteriors and promote historic downtown Rome. Eligible activities include structural and aesthetic improvements to facades including windows, doors, historic architectural features, awnings and others. Projects approved by the Historic Zoning Preservation Commission and Downtown Development Authority will be reimbursed for one-third (up to $1,000) of total project cost.

*Rome Revolving Loan Program*
A low interest loan program based on job creation administered at the local level by the City of Rome. The interest rates range from 4-7% and will depend on the financial strength of the borrower. Business owners must arrange financing for at least 50% of the cost of their proposed project.
Economic Benefits of Historic Preservation

In addition to the incentives available for historic preservation activities, recent studies have shown that there are measurable benefits in real estate, construction, and commercial activity due to historic preservation. A study conducted by the University of Georgia for the State Historic Preservation Division used Rome, Tifton, and Athens, Georgia to demonstrate that historic preservation is good business. Comparisons were made between areas within National Register districts, local historic districts, and non-designated districts.

The study concluded that historic preservation has quantifiable economic and fiscal impacts on local communities and that historic preservation contributes financially as well as aesthetically to the community. In the study, property values in National Register Districts increased in value 10% more than non-designated areas; locally designated properties increased in value almost 80% more than those only nationally designated.

401 Broad Street
II. Architectural Styles found in Downtown Rome

Gothic Revival 1830-1860
In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the romantic movement swept Europe and America, affecting both literature and architecture. Romantics extolled the symbolic virtues of Gothic architecture and fostered its revival. Distinctive features of Gothic architecture include a rough stone exterior, window surrounds, pointed arches and battlements.

225 Broad Street

Italianate 1840-1880
The Italianate style was popular in Georgia immediately before and after the Civil War, during the 1850s and 1870s. Italianate buildings are characterized by arched windows, decorative window hoods, rusticated quoins, and pronounced brackets under the roof line.

The Ford Building 105 Broad Street

Second Empire 1860-1880
The Second Empire style was borrowed from France. It is named for the reign of Napoleon III (1852-1870) who undertook a major building campaign that transformed Paris into a city of grand boulevards and monumental buildings. The mansard roof—a double pitched roof with a steep lower slope—was a hallmark of the Second Empire style. By increasing head room in the attic space, it provided an additional usable floor. To provide light to this floor, the mansard roof was almost always pierced with dormers.

The Masonic Temple 340 Broad Street
**Victorian Romanesque 1870-1890**

Used primarily for commercial and institutional buildings, Victorian Romanesque architecture was popular nationally from 1870-1890. This style is identified by different colored and textured stone or brick exteriors with contrasting window trim. Semi-circular arched window openings, usually supported by short polished stone columns, also characterize this almost exclusive commercial style.

![The Ledbetter Building](image)

**Tapestry Brick  1880-1930**

When commercial buildings made no studied attempt to imitate a high style, patterns in the brick and corbelling at the cornice line were applied to commercial building types. This decorative brickwork is not a style as such, but is described as tapestry brick.

![202 and 204 Broad Street](image)

**Beaux Arts Classicism  1890-1930**

One of Georgia's less prevalent styles, the Beaux Arts style was popular nationally from 1890-1930, and was used chiefly for institutions, commercial buildings, and grand residences. This style is characterized by large, grand, and symmetrical design compositions and was usually built of light colored stone in a variety of smooth finishes. Ornate details include quoins, shields, decorative garlands, and pilasters.

![The West Building](image)
NeoClassical 1895-1920
Following an interest in the revival of classic Greek and Roman cultures, this style was used to convey enduring greatness, nobility, and civic pride. Classical elements such as domes, pediments, porticoes, and columns were dramatically massed creating an imposing and stately structure.

City Hall
601 Broad Street

Art Deco 1920-1940
The Art Deco style was used almost exclusively for commercial buildings and was popular from 1920-1940. Rome has a number of handsome examples of the style. This was the first modern style which reflected the machine age. There was a bold use of geometrics in the massing of forms and vertical movement. New materials such as black glass, chrome, brass and neon were combined with profuse ornamentation such as zig-zags, chevrons, spirals, and rays to create this distinctive new style.

6 East Second Avenue
III. Elements of Design

Streetscape Design

In 1985, the City of Rome, the Rome Downtown Development Authority, PRIDE, and downtown property owners joined forces to plan and implement Streetscape.

The general project components included:
- the removal of overhead utility lines
- the expansion of existing sidewalks and sidewalk corners including decorative brick pavers
- the planting of Crape Myrtle, Zelkova, and Willow Oak trees along the sidewalks and the median
- the installation of period lighting and street furniture

One of the primary goals of the Streetscape program was to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment downtown. Since its implementation, the City of Rome has continued the precedent set by the Streetscape Project in new construction and renovation, including the Mitchell Plaza pedestrian park and the underground relocation of the overhead utility wires on West First Street. The Historic Rome Business Association has also contributed to the beautification of downtown with their creation of the Cotton Block Park.

With regard to future improvements, compatible design should be implemented to connect and extend existing Streetscape construction. These guidelines should be followed when working in or near public right-of-way:

- When pouring new sidewalk, concrete should be broom finished outlined with brick pavers. These pavers may be individually laid or consist of a high quality concrete stampwork.
- Landscaping should be incorporated in the design, including planters, grass strips, and tree wells. Some of the trees used downtown include willow oak, crape myrtle, zelkova, trident maple, gingko, and magnolia.
- New lighting should be period lighting similar to the existing lighting.
- Street furniture should be similar to the iron benches and water fountains found on Broad Street. All new fixtures should be painted a dark black-green.

Mitchell Plaza
There are several ideas that should govern the visual relationship between an infill building and its neighbors.

• **Setback**
The setback found in downtown Rome is generally at the lot line or sidewalk line.

• **Proportions of the Facade**
A downtown building should reflect the characteristic rhythm of facades along the street by filling its entire space. If the site is large, the mass of the facade can be broken into a number of smaller bays, to maintain a rhythm similar to the surrounding buildings.

• **Composition**
The composition of a facade (the organization of its parts) should be similar to that of surrounding facades. Rhythms that carry throughout the block (such as window spacing) should be incorporated into the new facade.

• **Proportions of the Openings**
The size and proportion of window and door openings of downtown buildings should be similar to those on surrounding facades. The same applies to the ratio of window area to solid wall for the facade as a whole.
**Building Materials**

The primary materials used in the historic commercial district are brick and stone of different colors, types, and textures. The color and texture of the building materials should be simple and unobtrusive:

- The storefront frame can be wood, cast iron or anodized aluminum.
- *The display* windows should be clear glass.
- Transom windows can be clear, tinted, or stained glass.
- The entrance door should have a large glass panel and can be made of wood, steel or painted aluminum.
- *The bulkheads* can be wood panels, polished stone, glass, tile or aluminum-clad plywood panels.
- The storefront cornice can be made of wood, cast iron or sheet metal or sometimes the horizontal supporting beam can serve as the supporting cap.
- The side piers should be the same material as the upper story.

Certain materials and design elements should never be used on a traditional commercial building. A mansard roof with wooden shingles, rough textured wood siding, fake bricks or stone and gravel aggregate materials are not appropriate. Horizontal lap siding, wood or synthetic, is not allowed in the historic commercial district. Existing exterior materials should not be covered by a modern replacement. Vinyl, aluminum, or other synthetic siding of historic buildings is not recommended. The covering of historic buildings with stucco or synthetic stucco surfaces is discouraged. Do not add non-historic or inappropriate ornamental features to a building.

**Maintenance:**

- Exterior materials should be maintained and preserved.
- Replacements should match the original elements in size, shape, and other visual characteristics.
STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

These Design Guidelines apply to exterior changes to buildings within locally designated historic districts. Interior changes, paint colors or other minor repairs do not require approval from the Historic Zoning Preservation Commission. The property owner should meet with the Rome Historic Preservation Planner and submit a project plan in order to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness. The design guidelines which govern a Certificate of Appropriateness are derived from the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The standards are summarized in part here:

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or the alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.

6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the existing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.
Georgia's historic commercial buildings, especially brick buildings, often had cellars for storage. Following the flood of 1886, the lower end of Broad Street up to Fourth Avenue was filled in to protect against future flooding. Particularly in the 100 and 200 blocks, the original first floors of the buildings are underground. Therefore, some of the commercial buildings found downtown have sub basement as well as basement levels.

**Maintenance:**
- To protect foundations, sills, and framing, foundations and basements need to be kept dry. If proper slope and drainage do not keep water away from the foundation, gutters and downspouts should be installed.
- Basement walls need to be kept in good repair and poured wall and floor junctures need to be kept sealed.
- Ventilation is essential to prevent dryout to a building's wooden structural members.
Commercial Facades

Commercial Facades in downtown Rome are typically one story in height and their design relates directly to the scale of the pedestrian. Traditional storefronts were designed to provide a large area for the display of merchandise, thereby encouraging window shopping. Storefronts found in downtown Rome usually consist of display and transom windows, an entry door, bulkheads, and a signboard area framed by structural members. The basic configuration can often be derived from old photographs of the building.

The basic commercial facade consists of three parts: the storefront with an entrance and display windows, the upper facade usually with regularly spaced windows, and the cornice that caps the building. These components appear in many shapes, sizes and styles but result in essentially the same facade.

Recommendation:
- Non-historic storefronts of inappropriate design on historic buildings should be replaced with a traditional configuration.
Bulkheads provide a base for the storefronts and protect the display windows from damage. They also help to establish horizontal rhythm. More modern storefront designs eliminate or decrease the size of bulkheads which is not only inappropriate for the design of historic buildings, but also destroys the proportional relationship of the storefront.

Recommendations:
- Preserve, maintain, or restore (uncover) bulkheads or kickplates where they exist(ed), matching the original in design, size, and material.
- Do not remove, conceal, or alter.
- For renovations with no documentary evidence, appropriate bulkhead materials are: painted woods, glazed tile, or painted metal in muted colors.
- Align bulkheads and kickplates with those of other buildings in the block.
Display Windows

A common characteristic of historic storefronts in downtown Rome is the large display windows which not only allow light into many of the interior spaces, but also showcase merchandise found inside.

Recommendation:
- The number, arrangement, size, style, glazing pattern, shape, and proportions of original or architecturally significant storefront windows and their surrounds should be retained or restored when possible.
- Replacement storefront windows made of aluminum or other metal finishes (not including brass, stainless steel, or decorative metal finishes) should be painted to match or coordinate with the color of the storefront area.
- Display windows should fill their original openings.
- Clear plate or tempered glass should be used for the display window.
- The use of partial curtains, blinds, or display cases in the storefront window will create additional privacy without changing the character of the storefront.
Located above the display windows and doors, transom windows contribute to the openness of the storefront façade. Transom windows were originally designed to allow as much natural light as possible into the interior of the store for illumination.

Sometimes transom windows are blocked to hide renovations which lowered the height of the ceiling to accommodate air conditioning or heating ducts. Recessing the dropped ceiling away from the transom and display windows a minimum of one and a half feet will preserve the openness of transoms and the display area and still accommodate modern conveniences.

Recommendations:
- Check for a transom hidden above a display window. If found, uncover and restore it.
- The number, arrangement, size, style, glazing pattern, shape, and proportions of original or architecturally significant transoms and their surrounds should be retained or restored where possible.
- Transom windows should fill their original openings.
- Historic transom materials such as prism or leaded glass should be retained and repaired when possible. If the original transom glass is removed, use clear, frosted, or darkened glass in its place if the original cannot be feasibly duplicated.
Entrances, Doors, and Access

Commercial buildings have storefront entrances which are typically recessed to provide a larger area for display, give shelter from the elements, and emphasize the entrances. Tall, single or double doors, built of wood with large areas of glass (at least 50 percent) that maintain the transparency of the storefront were historically used in storefront designs and are still visible in the downtown Rome district today.

Changes in regulations may require alterations for access and egress. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that all government and commercial buildings provide barrier free access. However, some historic buildings may be exempt from this requirement. The fulfillment of this requirement must be balanced with the goal of preserving the historic integrity of the building.

Recommendations:
- Do not enclose, cover, or alter entrance.
- Replacement doors that are metal (not including brass, stainless steel, or decorative finishes) should be painted to match or coordinate with the door surrounds and entrance.
- Doors and their surround should be recessed slightly from the plane in which they are located.
- New door openings should be located on a secondary side or rear façade when possible.
- Retain the original door hardware whenever possible. Dead bolt locks should be installed above or below the original hardware.
- Avoid using doors with mirrored or tinted glass (does not include colored or stained decorative glass).
- Do not use “fake historic” doors, solid wood or metal doors, or doors that are decorated with moldings, cross bucks, or window grills ~ these doors are residential in nature and are incompatible with the design of the historic façade.
- Avoid installing a storm or security door whose size, color, material, and texture are incompatible with the original door and door opening.

Door Replacement
If a door is to be replaced there are three basic options:
1. Have a new door built with the same design and proportions of the original.
2. Find a manufactured wooden or steel door that resembles the traditional store door.
3. Use a standard aluminum commercial door with wide stiles and a dark anodized or baked enamel finish.
Institutional Entrances and Doors

The entrances of these buildings are often heavily ornamented. Double doors are common because of the number of people using the building. For the same reason, the front façade may have multiple entrances. Doors often relate stylistically to the rest of the building.

- Entrances should not be added or removed. Retention of the original doors is important.

First Methodist Church
202 East Third Avenue

Institutional Access

The use of symmetrical front facades and elevated entrances on many of these buildings makes the front difficult to adapt for access without impairing integrity. Attempts should be made to provide a second entrance on a side or rear elevation.

- Side or rear access is preferred provided the entrance is not a service entrance. Where a barrier free access addition to the front is necessary, every attempt should be made to maintain the symmetry and architectural detail.

First Presbyterian Church
101 East Third Avenue
Awnings and Canopies

The use of awnings in downtown Rome is functionally and historically appropriate. Awnings provide shade and protection for pedestrians, reduce glare into the building and can be used to visually identify a business. Awnings can also serve to hide inappropriate alterations. A standard street-level awning should be mounted so that the valance is about eight feet above the sidewalk and projects out between four and seven feet from the building. A twelve inch valence flap is usually attached at the awning bar and can be used as a sign panel.

Fixed canopies are currently found on some of the historic buildings in downtown Rome. The canopy is usually supported by a metal frame and attached to the building façade by diagonal tie-rods or chains.

Recommendations:
- The awning or canopy should fit within the storefront, window or door to which it is being attached.
- Storefront awnings and canopies should be placed above either the display window and below the transom windows, or above the display and transom windows but below the signboard area.
- When attaching the awning to the building, avoid damaging or covering historic building materials or features. Try to align bottom of awning with awnings on adjacent buildings.
- Do not use plastic, wooden shingle, metal, or back-lit awnings. If a flat canopy exists, it can be dressed up with a 12 to 24 inch awning valance.
- Water runoff from awnings or canopies should be anticipated and planned for accordingly.

517 Broad Street
Upper Windows

Typically, windows in the upper façade of a building are placed symmetrically, creating a visual rhythm relating to the location of the storefront divisions or window areas at the street level. Most of the windows used in the upper facades of the buildings in downtown Rome are rectangular in shape, oriented vertically, and are double hung, one-over-one sash in single, paired, or banked arrangements. However, there are examples of decorative semi-circular windows, multi-paned windows, and steel framed windows. Window surrounds are wood and metal and usually simple in design with a stone and/or brick sill and lintel. Some have an ornamental lintel, pediment, or spandrel design in another material distinguishing certain windows from others on the façade. Often, deteriorated upper-story windows have been inappropriately replaced or boarded up. This treatment damages the character of the building and streetscape as well as creates a negative image that can be avoided through proper maintenance.

Recommendations:

- Preserve, maintain, or restore original windows, including proportions and spacing of openings, dimensions, sash, materials, and details.
- Do not enclose, cover, or alter. Open boarded or bricked windows.
- If original window design is unknown, use window type and detailing of the architectural style and period of the building. Replacement windows that are aluminum or metal (preferably anodized and of a dark color) should be finished to match the window frame or surround.
- Glazing or window glass should be clear unless colored, stained, or another glass was historically used.
- When storm windows are used to improve thermal performance, they should resemble the existing windows as closely as possible in shape, size, and appearance, and be painted or finished to match the window to which it is attached. Consider using interior storm windows to avoid compromising the historic character of the façade.
- Avoid trying to create false or earlier architectural styles.
- Do not add shutters unless based on physical or photographic evidence that shutters existed. If replacing missing shutters, use shutters to fit the window opening so that if closed, the opening would be covered.

247 Broad Street
Institutional Windows

Institutional buildings use windows to create a feeling of importance and reverence, or to enhance architectural style. Secular buildings frequently place larger, more elaborate windows on the first floor and near the entrance. Religious structures often use stained glass.

Recommendations:
- Sash windows should not be replaced with fixed windows. Replacement glass should match the original in appearance.

415 East Third Avenue
Wall Detail and Cornice

Wall detail and decoration enhance character and give buildings a distinct identity. The level of detail and decoration varies from one building to the next in Downtown Rome. Caps, pilasters, columns, roof pediments, etc. have historically been made of six materials: masonry, cast iron, pressed tin, wood, terra cotta, and decorative glass. Detailing and decoration is most often located on the street level of a commercial building and the façade area directly below the cornice or cap. Detailing is also found around some of the windows on the upper façade.

The cornice caps off the building, visually as well as physically, and can be an integral part of the building or can be a separate attachment. The cornice also protects the roof and wall junction from water penetration. The style, decoration, and materials of the cornice differ from one building to the next. The cornice may be a simple brick band or a highly detailed pressed tin projecting over the building façade.

Recommendations:

- Original wall detail and cornice should not be removed. Replacement of missing detail should be based upon duplication of the original.
- Sagging wall details and decorations should be carefully re-anchored using recommended preservation methods to avoid damaging historic details, decoration, or wall materials.

225 Broad Street
Signage

Signs play an important role in the attractiveness and the appearance of the district. Excessive size, quantity, and information on a building façade can create visual clutter which not only detracts from the street environment and the building’s character, but also makes it more difficult for a potential customer to identify the location of the business. Signs should be the appropriate size in relationship to the scale of the storefront window, building, and street.

The property or business owner should note this section regarding signage has two parts:
1. the recommendations for signage appropriate to the Downtown Rome District
2. a summary of the City’s Sign Ordinance regulations for the C-2 district (downtown)

General Signage Recommendations:
- A sign should express an easy to read, direct message: Keep it simple.
- Letter styles should be chosen that are easy to read and reflect the image of the business it represents.
- A storefront should not have more than two signs—one primary and one secondary.
- Signs should not cover or obscure any existing detail or element and should be compatible with the architecture of the building.
- The suggested square foot sign area for a single building façade should not exceed two times the linear street frontage of the building.
- Illuminated signs can be appropriate downtown if they respect the proportions of the storefront and the guidelines outlined above. Painted signs can be directly illuminated with fluorescent or incandescent lights. Internally lit signs are most effective with light letters on a dark opaque background. Exposed neon letters can also be effective, adding color and vitality to the street.

Applied or flush-mounted sign recommendations
- A flush-mounted sign board may extend the width of the storefront but should not be more than 2 1/2 feet high. Generally, lettering should be 8 to 18 inches high and occupy only about 65 percent of the sign board.
- The flush mounted sign should be located directly above the storefront, and not extend above the first floor. Flush mounted signs should allow ornamentation and architectural features to remain visible.

428 Broad Street
**Projecting Signs**
- Hanging signs should be mounted perpendicular to the building façade on the lower level or base of a structure.

![Image of a projecting sign](109_Broad_Street)

**Display Window Signs**
- Window signs should not obscure the display area, and should not occupy more than 15 percent of the total glass area on which they are displayed. The color of the letters should contrast with the display background.

![Image of a display window sign](425_Broad_Street)

**Signs on Awnings and Canopies**
- Lettering and/or graphics should not occupy more than 65 percent of the surface plane on which it is applied.
- Signs on awnings should be silk-screened or sewn on to the awning fabric.

![Image of a sign on an awning](440_Broad_Street)
Summary
City of Rome Sign Ordinance

The City of Rome Sign Ordinance for the C-2 district includes the following provisions:

- Before erecting a sign, you must obtain a sign permit from the Building Inspection Office, 236-4480.
- The maximum sign area of all on-premises signs shall not exceed 20 percent of the square footage of the wall face upon which they are situated.
- Flush mounted or wall signs shall not project more than 18 inches from the wall face upon which they are situated.
- Projecting signs shall be attached to the vertical surface of the building and shall not extend higher than twelve feet or beyond the eave or roofline of the building to which they are attached, whichever is lower.
- The bottom of projecting signs shall have a minimum height of nine feet from the ground.
- Projecting signs shall not extend further than six feet perpendicular from the wall to which they are attached.
- The area of projecting signs shall not exceed 18 square feet.
Color

Painting can be one of the most dramatic improvements you make to your building. Choosing the right combination of colors can unify the building elements within the façade as well as relate the building to others on the street. Three colors are sufficient to highlight any façade.

The base color appears on the upper wall and piers flanking the storefront. Often this color will be natural brick and will not require paint. If the building has been painted, a color should be selected that relates to the surrounding buildings.

The major trim color defines the decorative elements of the building, tying together the upper façade trim and the storefront. The trim color should complement the base color. If there is a natural stone or terra-cotta trim on the façade, it should serve as a trim color. Major trim elements include the building cornice; storefront cornice; window frames, sills and hoods; and storefront frame, columns and bulkheads (including aluminum framing).

The minor trim color should enhance the color scheme established by the base and major trim. Often a darker shade of the major trim can be used to highlight the window sashes, doors and selective cornice and bulkhead details. Care should be taken not to overdecorate the façade.

Color can also be used to minimize façade problems visually. A poorly patched and repainted wall is not as noticeable when it is painted; a missing upper cornice can be recreated with a one dimensional paint scheme; and inappropriate materials can be made more compatible with paint color.

Recommendation:
- Do not paint previously unpainted masonry surfaces.

214 Broad Street
New or Infill Construction

The construction of new buildings on downtown vacant lots is encouraged. The design of a new building should reflect the period of its construction (not a reproduction or copy of an old style). However, the new construction should be compatible to adjacent buildings in scale, height, materials, shape, orientation, rhythm and proportion of openings, texture and placement. These guidelines are concerned primarily with exterior appearances, and therefore do not seek to limit construction techniques or materials used in construction of the interior.

Recommendations:

- New construction should be similar to and compatible with adjacent buildings (maintain established rhythms and patterns and not stick out among them.)
- New or infill construction should be aligned with existing setbacks and spacing. The setback found in downtown Rome is generally at the lot line or sidewalk line.
- New or infill construction should be of similar height, width, scale, and proportions to adjacent buildings.
- New or infill construction should be of orientation to the street and with roof shape, roof pitch, and foundation height consistent with adjacent buildings.
- New or infill façade construction should be of similar materials and colors (not imitative of features copied from historic styles.)
- Infill architecture should reflect some of the detailing of surrounding buildings in window shapes, cornice lines and brick work.
New Institutional Construction

Institutional buildings are dispersed, infrequent, and often located at intersections. New construction of and additions to these buildings has a significant impact upon the surrounding area and should be concentrated upon properties where there is a precedent set for these types of buildings.

- New institutional construction should use moderate to generous setbacks, depending on the site.
- New construction should be oriented to the street, with the primary façade facing the street (even though side parking lots may create a need for a side entrance).
- The scale for new institutional construction should be guided by use and site. Structures of more than three stories, excepting towers, should be avoided.
- Roof type may vary although unusual shapes are discouraged. Additions should utilize the same roof form as the original buildings and read as a separate block than the original.
- New institutional buildings should use a distinct solid-to-void ratio. Ratios less than 40 percent and more than 80 percent should be avoided. Additions to existing buildings should use the same ratio and pattern of the original building.
- Materials and ornamentation may vary, though the use of exotic materials or excessive ornamentation is discouraged.
Rear Entrances

Following the flood of 1886, there was a good deal of fill at the lower end of Broad Street to prevent similar future events. As a result, entire first floors of some buildings and half floors of other buildings were covered up. With new construction like the Forum/County Administration Building and the Joint Police Facility being developed behind downtown buildings, vehicular and pedestrian traffic is increasing. The rear facades are becoming more visually important.

By improving the appearances and developing rear entrances, the rear façade can serve for more than just deliveries. A rear entrance can provide direct customer access to your store from the parking lots and the street. Before beginning work on a rear entrance, be sure to look for important historic elements (columns, brick decoration, etc.) that should be preserved.

Recommendations:

• Upper story windows should be uncovered to restore the rear of the building.
• Air conditioning units should be relocated off of the public right-of-way to the roof of the building.
• Obsolete exterior fixtures (old gutters, wiring) should be removed.
• Exterior steps or loading docks should be recessed into the building to remove them from the public right-of-way.

Also, consider these ideas:

• You may have to rearrange your display and storage area to handle the change in circulation.
• The rear façade should be clean and well-maintained. It should welcome customers, not threaten them.
• A small sign at the rear door should identify the store.
• An awning can be added for visual identification and convenience.
• Back windows can serve as secondary display windows.
• If there is enough sun, planter boxes might be added.

404 Tribune Street
Demolition by Neglect

This section focuses on a threat that most historic commissions, design review boards and local planning/community development professionals find very difficult to deal with effectively: Demolition by Neglect. Neglect of historic buildings is hazardous and detrimental to the individual property and the surrounding area or district. Because property owners are legally responsible for providing ordinary maintenance and repair, neglect should be avoided.

The Rome-Floyd Building Inspection Department is required by law through the Southern Standard Housing Code to inspect properties to determine if they are being allowed to deteriorate through neglect. Neglect includes conditions such as the deterioration of a building’s structural system or exterior architectural features and broken windows, doors, and openings, which allow entry of vermin and the elements.

When neglect occurs and poses a health, safety, or welfare to the general public, the Building Inspection Department must notify the owner, who has sixty (60) days to remedy the situation without penalty.

Recommendations:
- Neglect of historic buildings should be avoided.
- Property owners should provide ordinary maintenance and repair of structures
- Historic properties are to be monitored for neglect.
- Neglect should result in legal penalties.

![Image of broken gutter, cottonwood trees growing out of brick, uncontrolled drainage and damaged mortar, somewhere downtown]
The demolition of historic buildings diminishes the built environment and creates unnecessary waste. Demolition of historic buildings should be avoided whenever possible. When a historic building is demolished rather than reused, everyone pays an economic cost.

If a demolition is unavoidable, every effort should be made to mitigate the loss. Options include locating a buyer who might have an alternative use for the building or relocating the building to another site. If all efforts have failed, buildings of particular significance should be carefully photographed and documented prior to demolition. Special architectural features and ornamentation can be saved and incorporated into the design of the replacement structure.

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) in reviewing applications for demolitions or relocations shall not grant a Certificate of Appropriateness without reviewing at the same time replacement plans for the site. The HPC will hear evidence at its public hearing and may approve the application and issue a Certificate of Appropriateness only if one of the following conditions is determined to exist:

1. The application is for the demolition or relocation of a main non-contributing building or structure, a portion of a main non-contributing building or structure, or a non-significant building or structure secondary to the main non-contributing building or structure, and the approval of the application will not have a substantial adverse effect on the aesthetic, historic, or architectural significance of the Local Historic District;
2. The application is for the demolition or relocation of a non-significant addition to or portion of a main contributing building or structure or for a non-significant building or structure secondary to the main contributing building or structure, and the approval of the application will not have a substantial adverse effect on the aesthetic, historic, architectural, or archaeological significance of the Local Historic Property or Local Historic District; or
3. The application is for the demolition or relocation of a Local Historic Property or a contributing or noncontributing building or structure in a Local Historic District, the demolition or relocation of which would have a substantial adverse effect on the Local Historic Property or Local Historic District, but the replacement project is of special merit. For a replacement project to be of special merit, it must meet the following criteria:
   a) It must have significant benefits to the City of Rome or the community by virtue of exemplary architecture, specific features of land planning, or social or other benefits having a high priority for community services; and
   b) It must clearly serve the public interest to a greater extent than the retention of the present building(s).

Recommendations:
- Demolition of historic buildings should be avoided.
- An application for demolition shall be accompanied by a complete plan for the new development proposed on the site, a timetable, a budget for both the demolition and new construction, and satisfactory evidence that adequate financing is available.
- When demolition is unavoidable, every effort should be made to mitigate the negative impact.
IV. Appendix

Maintenance, Cleaning, and Repair

Water is the most damaging of the elements to historic buildings. If left unattended for some time, small problems such as broken gutters or minor leaks may cause extensive damage resulting in expensive repairs. In one case in downtown Rome, property owners ignored broken gutters on the rear of their building for several years. The result was rotted windows and damaged masonry — the property owners declared they could not afford to fix the damage, yet a fraction of that cost could have prevented the problem some years earlier.

Ordinary maintenance and repair can be granted a special waiver, and therefore does not require a Certificate of Appropriateness. Call the City of Rome's Historic Preservation Planner at 236-4406 to define your project.

Recommendations:

- Regularly inspect the exterior building surfaces to detect potentially harmful conditions.
- Masonry surfaces and mortar joints should be checked for signs of dirt buildup, cracking or spalling, masonry or mortar softness, deterioration, or white streaking (efflorescence). Repointing may be required.
- Peeling, mildewing, cracking, disintegrating paint, insect damage, warping, deterioration of caulking and wood decay are some of the warning signs to look for on wood surfaces.
- Buildings should have properly installed drainage systems in good working condition which expel water onto surfaces that slope away from the building at ground level.
- Repairs should be limited to affected areas, be sensitive to historic materials, and utilize matching materials.
- Never sandblast to clean or remove paint from buildings.
- For building surfaces that are currently painted, maintain the surface to protect the material beneath.
Application for Certificate of Appropriateness

☐ Pre-Application  ☐ Preliminary site visit request  ☐ Application  ☐ Contributing ☐ Non-contributing

Date received ____________

Hearing Scheduled

Designated Property

Property Location: ________________________________

Owner: ________________________________

Address: ________________________________

Phone: ________

Architect: ________________________________

Address: ________________________________ Phone ________________________________

Contractor: ________________________________

Address: ________________________________ Phone ________________________________

Type of Building:

☐ One Family  ☐ Commercial  ☐ Two Family  ☐ Garage  ☐ Multi-Family  ☐ Other  ☐ Addition to existing structure  ☐ Repair  ☐ Fence/wall  ☐ Parking  ☐ Demolish/move  ☐ Alteration to existing structure  ☐ New Construction

Proposed Work:

☐ Landscaping  ☐ Sign/advertising  ☐ Other
1. What work is planned?

2. Why is the work planned?

3. What materials will be used?

4. How will the work be performed? What methods of application will be used?

5. Will the existing appearance be the same or different? Explain.
6. What is the estimated cost?

7. When is the work to begin?

8. What is the anticipated completion date?

________________________   ______________________
Owner's Signature           Date
Procedure for Rehabilitation Activities
Within an Historic District

1. Arrange preliminary consultation with the Historic Preservation Planner in the Department of Environmental and Historic Planning in City Hall and obtain design guidelines and an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for your specific project. *Note: If proposed work constitutes in-kind replacement or minor repairs, staff may issue an administrative approval.*

2. Complete application with information required such as: scaled drawings of proposed work; materials list; location map; and brief description of work to be accomplished.

Historic Zoning Preservation Commission

3. Attend the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Historic Review Board when your application is reviewed. Meetings are held the third Wednesday of every month in the Sam King Room at City Hall. *Note: Deadlines for applications are two weeks in advance of the meetings (roughly the first of each month).*

- If approved, a Certificate of Appropriateness is issued and your project can proceed providing a building permit has been issued from the Building Inspector. Building permits must be obtained for all projects.

- If denied, the applicant may make modifications to the proposal based on suggestions and comments from the Historic Preservation Commission and resubmit application or apply for an Economic Hardship Variance. Appeals of a decision of the Historic Preservation Commission may be made to the Superior Court as allowed by Georgia Law.
Locally Designated Districts
Rome presently has seven residential districts listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Several districts have been designated by the City as local historic districts and are protected by Rome's Historic District Zoning Ordinance. Locally designated districts are shown on the map in the appendix.

Between the Rivers
The Between the Rivers Historic District consists of approximately 90 acres that were the original core of the city. Rome was founded in 1834 by entrepreneurs recognizing the area's strategic commercial location and potential. The city developed at the confluence of the Etowah and Oostanaula rivers and originally was bounded by those rivers. Rome was a nineteenth century planned county seat. Its original street plan is intact, and is unusual because the courthouse square was not the focal point, as in most county seats. Instead, the plan was a more linear grid plan, with commercial development strung lengthwise along blocks that are roughly parallel to the Oostanaula River. Commercial, institutional, industrial, and residential development all occurred in the Between the Rivers core area.

With the construction of a foundry in the 1850s, Rome became a regional commercial center and as such suffered heavy damage during the Civil War. Rome's recovery was steady, however, because of an increasing industrial base and growing role as an important cotton marketing center.

Today two-to-four story commercial buildings from the 1870s to the early 1940s line Broad Street. A cluster of public buildings remain near the north end of the street: the Old Floyd County Courthouse, Civic Auditorium, and Carnegie Library. Industrial areas of warehouses and factories developed along both rivers. A handful of those remain today. Plant owners and managers built and lived in fine houses in the district. More modest houses were built in the rolling hills sections. Examples of both classes of housing remain in the district.

Lower Avenue A and Upper Avenue A Historic Districts
These districts are intact remnants of DeSoto, one of Rome's earliest suburbs. DeSoto was developed by local entrepreneurs who laid out streets and sold lots, a process typical of the time. Commercial development in DeSoto began in the 1870s and was located along North Fifth Avenue. DeSoto was annexed to Rome in 1885 and three events fueled DeSoto's growth: construction of a bridge over the Oostanaula River in 1886; the arrival of a street car line; and the location of a number of industries in the immediate area. DeSoto, as can be seen in Lower Avenue A and Upper Avenue A Historic Districts, had both middle and working class housing on varying size lots, with dwellings set close to the streets. Turner McCall Boulevard has severed the two remaining portions of the old DeSoto neighborhood.
Oakdene Historic District
Oakdene District is a "self-contained" privately developed residential neighborhood unique to Rome. Built for Rome's prominent families and industrial and civic leaders, Oakdene was a planned subdivision with a curvilinear street layout as opposed to the grid street layout used elsewhere in the city. The curvilinear plan was typical of the period nationally and featured planted street trees, hedges, rock walls, and a planned lake which was never built. Oakdene Place developed from 1890 until 1903 when the construction of a foundry to the south halted development. During the 1910s and 1920s, a smaller area of modest mill workers' housing was built near the foundry.

National Register Historic Districts

East Rome Historic District
East Rome Historic District is an intact area of southeast Rome that began developing in 1873 when the East Rome Company bought 323 acres across the Etowah River. The company laid out streets and built a bridge across the river. The "Town of East Rome" incorporated in 1883. An 1883 city directory listed merchants, physicians, contractors, teachers, a bookkeeper, lawyer, brick mason, several students, and railroad workers, as well as several black residents. A streetcar line was built in the early 1900s and East Rome was annexed by the city in 1906. East Rome had commercial, institutional (including a fire hall), and residential development. The latter continued into the 1940s.

South Broad Street Historic District
This district is a ten acre intact remnant of Hillsborough, another area of early expansion beyond Rome's historic core. Hillsborough was incorporated as a separate suburban village in 1875. By the 1880s, with the arrival of the streetcar line and annexation to Rome, South Broad Street was rapidly growing into a neighborhood for business and professional people who worked in the Between the Rivers area. Middle and upper class families built large houses on sizable lots with deep setbacks along the ridge on the east side of South Broad Street. Substantial houses, but with smaller lots and more shallow setbacks, were built on the west side of South Broad. Around the turn of the century, modest mill worker housing was built on Etowah Terrace on the river.

Mt. Aventine Historic District
Mt. Aventine District is named for one of Rome's seven hills and is another intact remnant of the historic suburbs of South Rome. The area developed in the 1880s and was the home of the middle class businessmen. Houses are set far back from the street along the crest of Mt. Aventine.
Historic Review Process Flowchart

Meet with Preservation Planner

Obtain Design Guidelines and application

Complete and submit application by first of month

Attend Historic Preservation Commission Meeting at mid-month

Administrative Approval for In-kind Replacement or Maintenance

Application Approved

Certificate Issued

Begin Project

Modify and resubmit application and/or apply for Economic Hardship Variance

Approved

Begin Project

Appeal to State Superior Court
Building Classifications Within Districts

Districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Rome's locally designated historic districts are made up of buildings, structures (such as the Clock Tower), sites, and objects (the statue of Romulus and Remus in front of City Hall). Properties within both types of districts are classified as either contributing or non-contributing properties.

Contributing properties are generally over 50 years old and have retained enough of their historic materials and design, including changes over time, that persons from the past would recognize them. Contributing properties are eligible for Federal and state tax incentives.

Non-contributing buildings may either be non-historic building (those less than 50 years old) or historic buildings that have been so altered in material design, setting, location, or workmanship that they would not be recognized by a person from the past. Some altered historic buildings could become contributing if their modern alterations were removed. The most common alteration to commercial buildings is a false metal facade. It can be economically advantageous to remove false facades on income producing buildings, so that they become eligible for Federal rehabilitation tax credits and the Georgia property tax freeze.
Appendix
Works Consulted


### Important Contacts in Historic Preservation

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GLOSSARY –
COMMERCIAL STRUCTURES

**Corbel**
A projecting block, sometimes carved or molded, that acts as a means of support for the floor and roof beams as well as other structural members. Also used as ornamental supports for mantels.

**Cornice**
The projection at the top of a wall; the top course or molding of a wall when it serves as a crowning member. Two general types of cornices are the box cornice and the open cornice. A cornice along the slope (rake) of a gable or pediment is termed a raking cornice. Also, the upper projection of the entablature in classical architecture. Synonym: jet.

**Garland**
An ornament in the form of a band, a wreath, or a festoon of leaves, fruit, flowers or oats.

**Hood**
A protective and sometimes decorative cover found over doors, windows, or other objects. Synonyms: hood molding.
**Lintel**
The horizontal structural member that supports a load over an opening; usually made of wood, stone, or steel; may be exposed or obscured by wall covering.

**Pediment**
The triangular section framed by a horizontal molding on its base and two raking (sloping) moldings on each of its sides; used as a crowning element for doors, windows, over-mantels and niches.

**Pilasters**
A rectangular column or shallow pier attached to a wall; quite frequently decoratively treated so as to represent a classical column with a base, shaft and capital.
**Portico**
A covered walk or porch supported by columns or pillars, a columnaded porch.

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**Quoins**
Large stones or rectangular pieces of wood or brick, used to decorate and accentuate the corners of a building; laid in vertical series with usually alternating large and small blocks. Besides their decorative purpose, some quoins actually serve the more functional purpose of reinforcing the corners of a building.
Synonyms: coins, coin-stones.

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**Spandrel**
The triangular space between the shoulder of an arch and the rectangular framework that surrounds it; the space between two adjacent arches; the triangular space between the outer string of a stair and the floor.
**Transom**
A small window or series of panes above a door, above a casement, or double hung window. The horizontal member that separates a transom window from the door or window below is called a transom bar, or transom sill.
Synonyms: transom light, transom window.