



*Lawrence Avenue Development Corporation  
3403 W. Lawrence Ave, Suite 201  
Chicago, IL 60625  
T: (773) 478-0202,  
F: (773) 478-0282  
[www.northrivercommission.org](http://www.northrivercommission.org)*

## **STOREFRONT DESIGN GUIDELINES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Revitalization of the Lawrence Avenue Shopping Area has been the comprehensive, coordinated effort of the Lawrence Avenue Development Corporation (LADCOR) and the Albany Park Chamber of Commerce, both of which are programs of the North River Commission. LADCOR was formed in 1976 as a central forum for the planning and implementation of policies and programs for the development of Lawrence Avenue as Albany Park's Main Street. Decades of experience by LADCOR now inform the work of the North River Commission, the Albany Park Chamber of Commerce, and the Albany Park & Irving Park Special Service Area #60 on and beyond Lawrence Avenue.

LADCOR's goal is to create an attractive, convenient, well maintained shopping area that will provide the needed goods and services for Albany Park and surrounding communities. To achieve this goal, LADCOR has developed a program to:

1. Create an attractive shopping environment through the beautification of the street with new trees, street and pedestrian lights, sidewalks and benches.
2. Promote and market the area to residents, shoppers and potential merchants while improving the variety and quality of goods and services available.
3. Guide property owners toward tasteful renovation of their Lawrence Avenue buildings.

These guidelines confront the predominant appearance problems along Lawrence Avenue:

1. Lack of adequate building maintenance.
2. Misuse of materials used during previous façade work.
3. Abuse of the window display area.
4. Haphazard design, color and location of business signs.

These design guidelines offer information and guidance to property owners and commercial tenants planning to make exterior improvements to their buildings.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Common Design Features to Preserve</b>	<b>1</b>
Horizontal Bands	1
Multiple Storefronts	1
Entryways and Doors	1
<b>Other Design Considerations</b>	<b>1</b>
Awnings and Canopies	1
Colors	2
Security Systems	2
<b>Building Maintenance and Materials</b>	<b>2</b>
Acceptable Building Materials	2
Cleaning and Maintenance	3
Cleaning Masonry	3
Tuck-pointing	3
Painting Masonry	3
Repairing Stone	3
<b>Signs</b>	<b>4</b>
Size and Location	4
Recommended Sign Styles	4
Other Sign Styles	5

## COMMON DESIGN FEATURES TO PRESERVE

Three design features are common to Lawrence Avenue buildings. They are:

- 1) Horizontal bands of stone or brick above the first floor storefronts.
- 2) Multiple storefronts located in one building.
- 3) The original, regular placement of window and doors.

Façade renovation emphasizes the preservation and restoration of the building's original design. Your plans for exterior improvements should not alter or cover these features.

### Horizontal Bands

Horizontal bands of brick, stone or terra cotta located 10-13 feet above the sidewalk are common to many Lawrence Avenue buildings. These bands are an ideal location for business signs.

### Multiple Storefronts

Many Lawrence Avenue buildings were designed to accommodate several stores. The thoughtful renovation of these buildings can unify several storefronts and have a dramatic impact on a single block. The renovation of multiple storefronts should include a specific location for each storefront's sign. The location, size, type size and colors should be uniform from storefront to storefront.

### Entryways and Doors

Lawrence Avenue buildings were designed with entryways that make pedestrian access to the stores pleasant and inviting. Large windows provide spacious display area and interior lighting. Entryways should be kept well lit and clean. Trim can be painted with a color that accents the entry and provides contrast to the rest of the building.

## OTHER DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

### Awnings and Canopies

Fabric awnings add color and excitement to the street, call attention to your business and provide shelter from sun and rain. Awnings can also be used to cover interior dropped ceilings, which would otherwise be visible to the street. Fabrics and colors must be selected carefully, to be coordinated with the building and its surrounds. Avoid bright colors such as white, cream, yellow, or orange as they show dirt more readily than darker colors; exceptions are based upon considerations for context of building and type of business.

**Metal, illuminated, or bubble awnings/canopies are not allowed.** They add a permanent, inflexible element that was not an original feature of the building. Use only traditional or shed style awnings. The material used for awnings should be cloth or fabric (Sunbrella recommended). Vinyl material is not recommended as it shows dirt more easily and only lasts half as long as cloth.

Lettering on the awning should be simple and uncluttered. Limit the amount of text to the business name, address and telephone number. Letters should be no more than 12" in height on the main portion of the awning and no more than 8" in height on the valance.

## Colors

Choose colors carefully. Your choice will affect the entire street. The business logo can be used to set the color theme for painting. Coordinate the building color with sign design for the best looking building possible when the project is completed.

Do not use too many colors. One or two colors give the best effect.

Neutral colors, whites, grays and beiges bring out the most detail when used to paint a building. Dark colors, browns and blacks, cover defects and conceal details.

Blue, green, red, yellow and orange are best used only for the details of entryways and doors. Use these colors sparingly. Some colors fade more than others in the sun. Select colors that are specifically recommended for exterior use.

## Security Systems

Interior lighting is strongly recommended as a security device. In addition, it advertises your business.

Alarm systems are another alternative, which provide satisfactory security for your business.

Grates installed inside doors and windows provide equal protection to exterior grates while eliminating the exterior appearance of danger.

Window grates and security fences on the outside of the building do not promote the attitude that Lawrence Avenue is a safe place to shop or do business. **Exterior security grates are not allowed since equally effective alternatives exist.**

## BUILDING MAINTENANCE AND MATERIALS

### Acceptable Building Materials

The buildings along Lawrence Avenue are constructed mainly of brick, stone and terracotta. All of these materials are appropriate for renovation.

Avoid mixing materials and avoid imitations of the original materials since they change the original surface of the building and are not attractive. One or two materials will give the best effect. Do not introduce new materials to the building's façade.

When renovated a building or storefront, nothing will look better than the original material with which the building was constructed. Durability and low maintenance are also important considerations in your selection of materials.

Additions to buildings should use the same material that was used in the existing building. The material should match the size, color and texture of this original. If the material or architectural details cannot be matched, the new material and design should complement the existing building. **Avoid mixing materials or adding materials to the façade that were not the original materials.**

## **Cleaning and Maintenance**

Regular cleaning and maintenance is the most important element to creating an attractive building.

Old signs, unused support structure and empty electrical conduits should be eliminated. Follow this by removing materials added to the building after the original construction.

Sheet metal gutters, downspouts and copings should be repaired and replaced as needed. Secure them to the building and paint them to be as inconspicuous as possible.

## **Cleaning Masonry**

**Brick and stone with smooth, glazed or ornamental surfaces should never be sandblasted.**

These materials have porous surfaces. While they darken over time as their surfaces absorb dirt and pollutants, brick and stone can be permanently damaged by the abrasion of sandblasting. Brick and stone will be cleaned with acid washes and steam cleaning. If these surfaces are sandblasted they must be sealed with expensive coatings to prevent moisture from being absorbed.

Hard stone with a rough surface is the only material that responds well to being sandblasted.

Terracotta must never be sandblasted. Clean terracotta with a mild acid wash followed by steam cleaning.

## **Tuck-pointing**

Tuck-pointing should always be considered after cleaning masonry. Masonry surfaces must be kept well tuck pointed to avoid moisture seepage and excessive wear on the masonry.

Deteriorated mortar needs to be mechanically ground or cut and then tuck pointed with a cement mortar tinted to match the color of the masonry. Avoid mortar colors that provide a high contrast to the brick.

## **Painted Masonry**

**Leave masonry unpainted.** Brick is a durable material and inexpensive to maintain. If a masonry surface has been seriously damaged it is worthwhile to go to the expense of properly sealing and painting it; anything less than a quality job will result in cracking and peeling paint. Steam cleaning will not remove paint and sandblasting will only cause further deterioration of the surface.

## **Repairing Stone**

Replace damaged or missing stonework with material that exactly matches the original stone. Never use artificial materials as a substitute of the original.

## SIGNS

The existing attitude of many business owners along Lawrence Avenue is “the more signs the better.” In fact, the opposite is true. A sign’s purpose is to identify the business and what the business sells. Follow this guide when decided on a new sign for your business.

### Sign Size and Location

Place signs on the horizontal band of brick or stone above the first floor storefronts or in the panel located over the display windows. The consistent location of signs from one storefront to the next makes locating the businesses easier for pedestrians and drivers.

Randomly located signs and signs that contain too much information are hard to read and are easily missed by drivers.

An effective sign size equals:

- 1 square foot sign for each...
- 1 linear foot of storefront

For example, a store with a 30-foot storefront would have a sign up to 30 square feet in size. That sign could have the maximum dimensions of:

- 3’x10’
- 2’x15’
- 6’x5’

Keep the dimension of the sign consistent with the surface on which it will be mounted. Do not put a square sign on a rectangular surface such as the horizontal band above the storefronts. Select a rectangular sign of similar proportion.

### Recommended Sign Styles

Surface Signs are the most desirable sign style. They can be installed in the horizontal band above the storefronts or over the panel above the display windows. Surface signs can be:

- Individual channel letters attached directly to the surface of the building;
- A prefabricated box sign with a metal face panel and flush, translucent plastic letters.
- A flat Plexiglas, metal or wood panel with painted letters or letters constructed of another material and attached to the panel.

Surface signs can be lit internally, from a panel installed just behind the sign or by panels installed above or below the sign. Flashing signs or lights are **NOT** allowed under these guidelines. They pose a nuisance to neighbors and are a potential hazard for drivers.

Window Signs are another effective sign style for Lawrence Avenue. These signs can be either letters painted directly on the window or a plastic panel with painted letters installed just inside the window.

Window signs give the most information about the business. These signs are easily read by pedestrians and are the last information customers see before entering your business.

Temporary Window Signs should be used to advertise short-term sales only. Window signage should not occupy more than 20% of the window area.

Avoid plastic box signs with slide-in letters. They are hard to read and unattractive.

Signs on Upper Stories are useful only to pedestrians. Locate a sign on an upper story only if the business is located there. Follow the rest of these guidelines for appropriate signs styles.

Wall Graphics add color and atmosphere to the street. Wall graphics are usually the company logo or symbol painted on the side of buildings. The graphic should be proportional to the wall and not overwhelm the architecture of the building. Wall graphics should not advertise or promote products.

#### Other Sign Styles

The following signs styles are **NOT** recommended:

Projecting and Overhanging Box Signs and their support structures create a cluttered, unattractive appearance. Large illuminated projecting box signs are **NOT** recommended. They are outdated and pose a hazard if not maintained properly. Recommendation: simple projecting blade signs are more effective in advertising a business; and provide a less cluttered and more welcoming pedestrian experience.

Pedestal Signs should be used only when a business is set back at least 35 feet from the street. If a pedestal sign is necessary for your business it must be stationary and be designed to have as little structure as possible. Business closely fronting the commercial street should never use a pedestal sign.

Rooftop Signs are not effective. They are visible neither to auto nor pedestrian traffic. Often, rooftop signs are projecting signs or billboards, both of which are discouraged sign styles along the business district.

Billboards advertise products, not local businesses. Billboards reduce the visibility of adjacent businesses, detract from the appearance of the buildings on which they are located and distract shoppers from viewing signs and storefronts of local businesses.

LED Signs produce excessive light pollution and distracts from neighboring businesses.

Redundant Sign Locations – Multiple signs conveying the same information that are visible from the same vantage point (*Example:* installing business signage above an awning which has the same business signage). A better use of space would be to have signage on the awning itself.

Freestanding Signs are prohibited per ordinance (Sec. 17-3-0500 and Sec. 17-4-0500 for Pedestrian Street lists).

Off-Premise Signs – signs advertising other businesses not located on building the sign is located. Prohibited per ordinance (See Sec. 17-3-0500 and Sec. 17-4-0500 for Pedestrian Street lists)

**Examples of Mock-Up Renderings**

Renderings depicting proposed improvements are required for ALL applications

