

Tacony Community Development Corporation



Design Guidelines for Torresdale Ave in Tacony

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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	Title	Page
Table of Contents:	Acknowledgements	3
	Introduction	6
	Letter From The Director	7
	Design Theory	8
	Where Do I Begin?	9
	Elements of A Facade	
	Upper Facade & Cornice	10
	Entrances	12
	Windows	14
	Signage	16
	Awnings	18
	Security	20
	Paint Colors	22
	Landscaping	24
City Processes	26	
Resources	27	

Introduction:

What are design guidelines, who are they for?

Design Guidelines address appearance issues that business and property owners face in planning commercial and retail improvements. In general, they are intended to provide ideas, stimulate thinking and promote good design among the many participants in neighborhood commercial corridor revitalization. They address the physical aspects of supporting a healthy commercial area through storefront design and building maintenance. By establishing these guidelines, the city encourages several important public and private objectives.

Design guidelines:

- Improve the quality of physical alterations to commercial corridor.**
- Enhance the quality of the pedestrian experience along a commercial corridor by providing a pleasant shopping experience for business customers.**
- Enhance economic investment for business and property owners.**
- Protect and conserve neighborhood architectural character.**
- Promote community awareness of the physical environment.**
- Encourage flexible and individual creativity rather than anonymous uniformity.**

Pete Naccarato
Board President

The Tacony Community Development Corporation is committed to great design. These guidelines provide advice to property owners and businesses planning commercial and retail improvements. Our thanks go out to the project leads Ray Brogden and Anthony Zul as well as the rest of the team. With these design guidelines the Community Development Corporation will:

- *Encourage high-quality alterations and physical changes to buildings along the corridor*
- *Improve the quality of the pedestrian experience along the corridor, creating a pleasant shopping experience for customers*
- *Encourage new investment in the corridor*
- *Protect and conserve our corridor's special character*
- *Promote community awareness of our corridor*
- *Encourage creativity and uniqueness over anonymous uniformity*

By working together we can enhance the overall appearance of the Torresdale Avenue Commercial Corridor. We look forward to working with you to once again make Torresdale Avenue the heart of our community.

Design Theory:

Why good design makes commercial corridors stronger

The physical design of a neighborhood commercial district contributes greatly to the overall image of the community; each has its own unique cultural qualities to attract residents, customers and visitors. The distinctive characteristics of buildings of varying of ages make commercial corridors interesting and enjoyable for both visitors and residents

On a commercial corridor, facades built in the 19th century may exist alongside those built in the mid- 20th century. Often, commercial structures started as residences and were later converted into shops. Thus, building features from one period were reconfigured to that of another, simply to keep up with the architectural fashion of the time. If the resulting appearances shows quality craftsmanship and are pleasing in proportions, composition and details, then the façade is a valuable visual resource for the corridor. Thoughtful design improvements reinforce the positive identity of a community's retail core and create a “sense of place” that is distinct to the neighborhood.

Where To Begin:

Step 1: Evaluate your building's appearance.

It is important to take a good look at a building before proposing alterations to its exterior. Consider the windows, doors, and detailing. Note the entire façade, including the upper stories as well as the storefront. A successful improvement strategy is one that treats the building as a whole and does not neglect the upper floors. Remember that storefronts should be viewed as just a part of an entire building. The goal is to achieve visually distinct facades that relate to their surrounding and provide a sense of cohesiveness in the commercial corridor without strict uniformity.

Step 2: Evaluate your building's surroundings.

A high level of upkeep always strengthens the image of a commercial corridor. Sidewalk maintenance is the responsibility of the property owner whose property is immediately adjacent to it. The sidewalk should be kept free of debris and washed regularly. Trash generated by the store should be kept enclosed areas at the rear of the building and must be easily serviced by trash collection trucks.

Step 3: Make needed repairs; establish a maintenance schedule.

Preserve the value of façade improvements by repairing any damage before façade work begins. In order to prevent major building repair in the future, a regular maintenance schedule should be established for façade cleaning and repair. The following are recommended preventive maintenance steps:

- Checking roof to ensure that it is watertight.
- Scraping chipped and peeling paint and repainting.
- Repointing and patching deteriorated masonry or stonework joints.
- Repairing or replacing weatherproofing agents.
- Repairing cracked sidewalks and broken curbs as damage occurs.

UPPER FACADE

Objective: Use the architectural features of the entire building to provide guidelines for the design of the storefront – incorporate upper floors in façade improvement plans.





RECOMMENDED

- Maintain existing architectural elements around the storefront windows.
- Preserve and restore historical features. Repair upper façade with material that is the same as, or that complements the existing construction.
- Use lighting to accentuate the architectural features of the building.
- Respect the entire commercial corridor by assessing the context of your building in the surrounding streetscape – ask, “how does my particular building work in the street?”
- In older buildings, consider installing a storm window on the inside of the original window so it will not be seen.

NOT RECOMMENDED

- Covering any part of the building façade with aluminum, stucco, false-brick, veneer, or any other sheet material that will obscure opening or detailing.
- Filling in windows or doors with any material.
- Creating windowless blank walls or destroying original architectural detail.
- Removing existing quality materials and details from a building.
- Using materials or adding details that simulate a history other than that of the original building.

ENTRANCES

Objective: Make entrances obvious and welcoming.





RECOMMENDED

- Use doors that contain a lot of glass so the shopper can see the items inside.
- This also encourages safety by promoting visibility.
- Choose a door that is compatible in scale, material and shape with the overall façade.
- Implement improvements according to the ADA standards for Handicapped Accessibility.

NOT RECOMMENDED

- Using doors that are opaque or that include no glass. Doors that are more suited to residential use should be avoided for commercial entrances.
- Pulling back the entrances from the building façade. This takes away precious retail space and creates unusable outdoor space that often collects rubbish and provides space for loitering.
- Storing merchandise behind one door of a double door entrances.
- Closing a part of an entrance or making the entrance door smaller than the original door.
- Use of slippery materials on walking surfaces.
- Making entrances complicated or difficult to get through by crowding them with merchandise.

WINDOWS

Objective: Attract attention to the products or services within. stimulate interest in new products or services. make the street feel lively, inviting and secure.





RECOMMENDED

- Use large windows – provide the maximum of visibility into the stores.
- Use clear glass for easy viewing into the stores.
- Clean glass regularly.
- Use windows to display merchandise by using the full extent of the glass.
- Make the display exciting, fun and original.
- Change the display often to keep passerby interested and to continually draw in the potential customers.
- Display small merchandise at the front of the window or at eye level.
- Use the second and even third floor windows for displays.

NOT RECOMMENDED

- Use of tinted, opaque or smoked glass.
- Covering windows with too much signage or attaching paper signs on windows
- Reducing window size to an area smaller than its original.
- Boarding up or closing upper story windows in any fashion.
- Use of ground floor or upper floor window space for storage.
- Cluttering window displays with too much merchandise or disorganized displays that prevent customers and pedestrians from seeing inside the store.
- Use of windows display space as storage.
- Keeping display windows empty.

SIGNAGE

Objective: communicate the name of a store and add visual interest to the streetscape experience.





RECOMMENDED

- Pedestrian scaled signage that is consistent in scale with other signs on the corridor, and that compliments a building's architecture.
- Type fonts and colors that are legible.
- Distinctive lettering styles that represent the store.
- Artwork, icons logos and simple messages.
- Lettering on window glass itself.
- Professionally fabricated signage in metal, plastic, glass or some combination of these materials, as well as in stone or wood.
- Incorporating illumination of a sign at night as an internal part of the sign's design.
- Signs should be mounted no more than one story above the sidewalk level.

NOT RECOMMENDED

- Using many signs that are confusing to read – use one or two signs.
- Covering building elements such as windows and cornices with signs.
- Using long, complicated messages.
- Attaching paper signs to windows.
- Using large projecting signs that are secured onto a building by metal armatures.

AWNINGS

Objective: add an exterior building element that serves a practical purpose and enhances a store's appearance, if appropriate for your building.





RECOMMENDED

- Assess your storefront for the appropriateness of an awning.
- The size of the awning must be scaled to the size of the building and its context in the commercial corridor.
- Use awning that have a simple shape
- Use fabric made of weather resistant material.
- Consider using retractable awnings.
- Use awnings to create pleasant shaded spaces.
- Use awnings to cool interiors and save energy.
- Use awnings to mask security grilles.
- Use awnings as signs
- Use larger awnings to provide a covered place for outdoor merchandise display and sales on the sidewalk.

NOT RECOMMENDED

- Use of back lit or internally lit awnings.
- Use of aluminum, vinyl or other plastic materials.
- Covering architectural details with continuous awnings or oversized awnings.

SECURITY

Objective: provide overnight building security in a visually pleasing way.





RECOMMENDED

- Use open grilles that allow lighted window displays to be seen at night.
- Keep security grilles clean and well maintained.
- Conceal grille box or housing unit under awnings and signs.
- Install security grilles inside of the display glass and make sure they can be completely concealed during regular business hours.
- Explore various types of transparent security grilles and find one that best fits the look of your store.

NOT RECOMMENDED

- Use of opaque, solid security grates.

PAIN T C O L O R S





RECOMMENDED

- Color should be considered in the context of the entire commercial corridor.
- When choosing color for your building façade, consider how sunlight strikes your building. This will determine how the color really appears to the eye.
- Color should be used to bring together the elements of the entire façade, from the cornice to the entrance door.
- Color should complement, respond to and enhance the architectural character and detailing of a building.

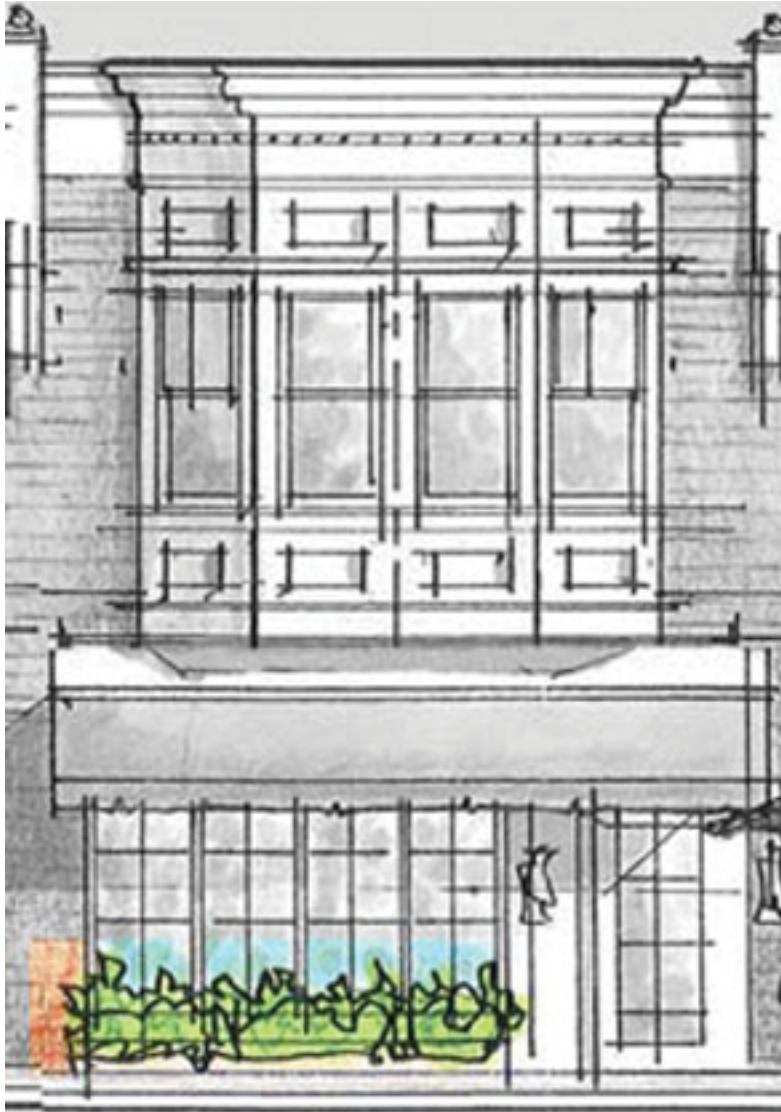
NOT RECOMMENDED

- Using more than 3 colors, because it will make your façade seem less coherent and less composed.
- Painting arbitrary decorative lines, bands or graphics directly on the façade if not related to the building's character or details.
- Do not use “loud” colors like bright yellow, bright orange.”
- Do not paint masonry that has not been painted

LANDSCAPING

Objective: strengthen the appeal of your business and the character of the commercial corridor.





RECOMMENDED

- Use landscaping to create shaded area and reduce wind speed on commercial corridors.
- Plant trees to reduce air pollution and noise.
- Plant trees that have high, sparse canopies that will not cover storefront signage.
- Use plants and trees that are native to the area and easily maintained.
- Use flower boxes at windows and plant containers at entrances.
- Use plant containers that are sturdy and stable so they cannot be easily tipped or blown over.
- Keep plant containers free of litter and other debris
- Keep plants suitably watered and pruned.

NOT RECOMMENDED

- Use of exotic landscaping that will not survive the climate conditions.

City Processes:

Reviwing this guide is only the first step in making storefront façade improvements in Philadelphia. Depending on the work you want to do, other city approvals may be needed. Contact the Tacony Development Corporation at 215-501-7799 for guidance through the process or contact the mayor’s business action team at 215.683.2100.

The following departments may have additional information useful to you:

The art commission

The department of commerce

The historical commission

Licenses and inspections

Philadelphia city planning commission

Philadelphia city code and home rule charter grille ordinance

The streets department (sanitation)

Resources:

ADA Requirements, website:
<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm>

Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, website:
www.pensylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org

Tacony Community Development Corporation
4819 Longshore Ave, Unit C
Philadelphia, PA 19107
215.501.7799
<http://www.taconycdc.org/>
Programs: Design Committee assists with design advice and ideas. CDC works with the Storefront Improvement Grant Program (SIP) and the City of Philadelphia Commerce Department.

Tacony Civic Association
215-338-2575
taconycivic@gmail.com
<http://taconycivic.org/>
Programs: Community organization reviews zoning variances and appeals for community input and participation.

Historical Society of Tacony
4819 Longshore Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19135
Programs: Promotes the historic district and history of Tacony.

City of Philadelphia Commerce Department
Office of Business Services
1515 Arch Street, 12th Floor Philadelphia, PA 19102
215.683.2100
<http://www.phila.gov/commerce/comm/>
Programs: Storefront Improvement Grant Program offers matching grant to eligible storefront improvements. Office of Business Services offers technical assistance for permitting and licenses to business owners and new businesses.

Resources: (cont.)

**City of Philadelphia Historical Commission
Philadelphia Historical Commission
City Hall, Room 576
Philadelphia, PA 19107
215.686.7660**

<http://www.phila.gov/historical/>

Programs: Regulates significant design changes to certified historic structures within the City of Philadelphia.

**Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia
1616 Walnut Street, Suite 1620
Philadelphia, PA 19103
215.546.1146**

<http://www.preservationalliance.com/>

Programs: Preservation education and outreach. Publishes a contractor list for preservation-minded building contractors.

**Philadelphia Department of Licenses and Inspections
Municipal Services Building
1401 John F. Kennedy Boulevard ~ 11th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Dial 311 within Philadelphia, 215.686.8686
<http://www.phila.gov/li/>**

Programs: Performs inspections of business and commercial properties. Issues construction permits and certifies zoning status in addition to handling zoning variance issues through the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

**Design + Drafting & Permit Service Consultants
Ray Brogden 267.231.3552 Ray.Brogden@gmail.com
Provides services for all your city hall permit needs as well as design and drafting consultations.**

Resources: (cont.)

Philadelphia City Planning Commission

One Parkway, 13th Floor

1515 Arch Street

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102

215.683.4615

<http://philaplaning.org/>

Programs: Administers the city's comprehensive plan, handles the city's capital program and capital budget, proposed zoning ordinances and amendments, and governs the subdivision of land.

Regulation of the Philadelphia City Code and Charter Grille Ordinance

Title 4, Chapter 7 of the Philadelphia Code

[http://www.amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll/Pennsylvania/philadelphia_pa/thephiladelphiacode?f=templates\\$fn=default.htm\\$3.0\\$vid=amlegal:philadelphia_pa](http://www.amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll/Pennsylvania/philadelphia_pa/thephiladelphiacode?f=templates$fn=default.htm$3.0$vid=amlegal:philadelphia_pa)

The Merchants Fund

1616 Walnut St, Suite 802

Philadelphia, PA 19103

215.399.1339

info@merchantsfund.org

Programs: Special grant and loan programs for business owners.

Community Design Collaborative

1216 Arch Street, First Floor

Philadelphia, PA 19107

215.587.9290

<http://cdesignc.org/>

Programs: RStor grant program assists property owners with pro-bono design services through the Community Development Corporations.

SCRUB, The Public Voice for Public Space

1315 Walnut Street, Suite 1605

215.731.1775

info@publicvoiceforpublicspace.org

<http://www.publicvoiceforpublicspace.org/>

Programs: Education and outreach to improve the appearance of neighborhood public spaces.

