



## **AGENDA**

### **CITY OF OPELIKA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

September 11, 2025

4:30 p.m.

Meeting Chambers at Opelika Municipal Courtroom  
300 MLK Boulevard

Call to Order

Approve August 14, 2025 minutes.

#### Public Comment/Citizen Communication

#### Old Business

#### New Business

1. 815 6<sup>th</sup> Ave: Northside Historic District  
COA: Replace windows  
Applicant: Patricia Quinn
2. 704 Ave D: Geneva Historic District  
Retroactive COA: Install Ramp and Concrete Drive  
Applicant: CJCF, LLC
3. 500 Geneva St: Geneva Historic District  
COA: Ramp and Parking  
Applicant: CJCF, LLC
4. 121 S. 9<sup>th</sup> St: Downtown Historic District  
COA: Enclose Display Area & Remove Door  
Applicant: Randy Brown
5. 913 S. Railroad Ave: Downtown Historic District  
COA: Rehabilitation of Storefront  
Applicant: Paul Gibson-Studio BGP Architects

6. 917 S. Railroad Ave: Downtown Historic District  
COA: Demolition and New Construction  
Applicant: Paul Gibson-Studio BGP Architects
7. 921 S. Railroad Ave: Downtown Historic District  
COA: Demolition and New Construction  
Applicant: Paul Gibson-Studio BGP Architects
8. 923 S. Railroad Ave: Downtown Historic District  
COA: Façade Renovation and New Construction  
Applicant: Paul Gibson-Studio BGP Architects

#### Other Business

9. Enforcement Report
10. Staff Report
11. Next meeting October 9, 2025
12. Adjournment

**The City of Opelika complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and will make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to meetings. If you need special assistance, please call the City's ADA Coordinator 72 hours prior to the meeting at (334)705-5130.**



# HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

300 Martin Luther King Blvd.

**August 14, 2025**

**TIME: 4:30 PM**

1. A CALL TO ORDER

Rush Denson called the meeting to order at 4:37 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**A motion was made by Mike Buckalew to accept the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Aaron Bushey. All approved.**

1. Approve May 8, 2025 minutes

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS

(Limit comments to 3 minutes or less)

Rush Denson opened the floor for public comments. There were none.

4. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to discuss.

5. NEW BUSINESS

2. 509 S. 7th St: Geneva Historic District

COA: Enclose Side Door

Applicant: Jimmy Allen Builders, LLC

Staff presented the proposal to enclose a door on the side of the building to allow for interior kitchen build-out and ventilation. Infill will be blocked to match the existing exterior. This is a noncontributing structure inside the historic district.

There was no further discussion.

**A motion was made by Debbie Purves to approve as presented. The motion was seconded by Linda Lanz. All approved.**

3. 213 S. 8th St: Downtown Historic District

COA: Replace side door, Awning, add Pilasters

Staff gave an overview of the proposed replacement of the side door and addition of metal standing seam awning and pilaster columns. The applicant provided several options for the door unit, including two wood doors and one fiberglass door. Staff explained the applicant wanted to add the pilasters to tie in with the pilaster on the front of the building and the wood archway leading to Courthouse Square.

The wood doors are preferred over a fiberglass door for downtown. However, it would depend on the quality of the fiberglass door.

The applicant stated their first choice was the mahogany door unit. They believe with the new awning and slope of the patio, weathering will be minimal. The pilaster height will be adjusted to fit the door frame and position of lighting.

**A motion was made by Mike Buckalew to approve. If the applicant chooses to install a fiberglass door unit, additional information will need to be provided to staff for review and approval prior to installation. The motion was seconded by Aaron Bushey. All approved.**

6. OTHER BUSINESS

4. Enforcement Report  
There was no report.
5. Staff Report  
Staff had nothing additional to report.
6. Next meeting DATE
1. Next meeting September 11, 2025

7. ADJOURN

**A motion was made by Aaron Bushey to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mike Buckalew. All approved.**

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

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Rush Denson, Chair

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Linda Lanz, Secretary

**City of Opelika**  
**Historic Preservation Commission**  
**Staff Report**

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**Agenda Item #:** 1  
**Meeting Date:** 9/11/2025  
**Action Requested:** COA: Install Windows  
**Location of Property:** 815 6<sup>th</sup> Ave; Northside Historic District  
**Petitioner:** Patricia Quinn

**Resources:**

*Circa 1980. Ranch residence. Non-contributing structure.*

**Proposal:** The petitioner requests a COA for the following:

1. Replace all windows with same style; Beveled triple slider, white metal frames.

**Guidelines:**

Windows:

- a. Retain and repair existing windows including window sash, glass, lintels, sills, architraves, shutters, pediments, hoods and hardware. If new sashes are used, duplicate the original material, design, size and hardware of the original window. Do not change window size, sash size or windowpane size.
- b. Do not introduce or create new window openings into the front principal elevation of the structure and do not enlarge or reduce original window openings to fit new stock window sizes.
- c. The original number and arrangement of panes should be maintained.
- d. Storm windows should be visually unobtrusive and should not damage existing window frames. Storm windows should be designed so that they can be removed in the future without damage to the original fabric of the structure. Storm windows should be compatible in color and design with the original windows. For example, mill finished aluminum storm windows should not be used with painted window sash.
- e. Plastic, canvas or metal strip awnings or fake shutters that are not compatible with the architectural style of the structure should not be used.
- f. Where existing shutters are replaced or reinstalled when missing, the new shutters shall be sized to fit the window opening, in height and width, whether the shutters are fixed or operable. Composite materials are allowable for shutters so long as they duplicate the original in shape and texture.
- g. New window openings should not be introduced unless they match the existing window configuration and their placement harmonized with the existing rhythm of openings.
- h. Original windows should not be filled in.

**Photo's:**



**Current windows**



**Proposed windows**

**Staff recommendation:**

1. Staff recommends approval of installation of new metal framed triple slide windows to match existing windows on this non-contributing structure.

**City of Opelika**  
**Historic Preservation Commission**  
**Staff Report**

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**Agenda Item #:** 2  
**Meeting Date:** 09/11/2025  
**Action Requested:** Retroactive COA: Install concrete ramp with iron rails and Pour concrete drive  
**Location of Property:** 704 Ave D; Geneva Historic District  
**Petitioner:** CJCF, LLC

**Resources:**

*McCall House. Circa 1915. One-story, frame, pyramidal roof with front offset porch, brick columns, triple window. Contributing structure.*

**Proposal:** The petitioner requests a COA for the following:

1. Installed concrete handicap ramp on front of historic structure with iron railing with handicap parking spot in front. Large crepe myrtle was removed to allow for ramp and parking pad.
2. New concrete drive installed, removing ribbon drive entrance.

**Proposed Guidelines:**

A. THE ENVIRONMENT:

1. The environment consists of all exterior features in the designated historic districts which are visible to the public and includes structures, outbuildings, landscaping, streets, appurtenances, trees, mass and spacing between structures, scale, mass, color and materials of buildings that give a neighborhood its distinguishing character and contributes to its historic district designation.
2. Significant landscape features such as public parks and gardens, street lighting, signs, street benches, sidewalks, streets, alleys and building setbacks that have traditionally been maintained in the historic district and that contribute to its historic character should be retained. Existing streets should not be widened. Paving material should not be changed to a different texture and color. Inappropriate new streets or parking lots incompatible with the neighborhood should not be constructed. *(updated 08/12/14)*
3. New plant materials, fencing, walkways, housing and other outdoor lights, signs, benches, etc. should be compatible with the character of the neighborhood in size, scale, material and color.
4. Plant material should be maintained so as not to become a hazard to the public, public property or shall not be allowed to cause deterioration to structures.
5. Existing street trees should not be removed without a plan for replacement. *(updated 08/12/14)*

The following items DO NOT require a COA:

- Back yard Tree house, swing sets and trampolines
- Benches and other outdoor furniture and accessories
- Sculpture and another outdoor artwork
- Pools and patios
- Tree pruning, clearing of overgrown bushes, vines, saplings, etc.
- Tree removal (less than 4" diameter at breast height or diseased).
- Planting new trees, shrubs, ground cover, etc.
- Landscape edging
- Flower, vegetable and rock gardens
- Flowerpots, planters, window boxes, birdbaths, bird houses, etc.
- Adding gravel to existing driveways
- Patching deteriorated concrete or asphalt pavement, walks, steps, etc.

The following commonly requested projects require a COA:

- Changes to stone walls and other historic site features
- New or expanded parking areas/lots
- New and expanded driveways and walkways
- Staff approval for change of materials (i.e. gravel to concrete)

#### F. ADDITIONS:

1. Additions are areas that increase the living or working space of a structure. This does not include the addition of architectural elements.
2. Additions should be compatible with the architectural style of the structure and should not obscure, remove, conceal or replace significant architectural features of the existing structure. Additions should be compatible in scale, mass, proportion, materials, texture and color to the existing structure.
3. Additions should follow the guidelines for new construction

The following items DO NOT require a COA:

- Installation of temporary/emergency wheelchair ramps when they are not attached to the building

The following commonly requested projects require a COA:

- Installation of temporary wheelchair ramps (staff approval)

#### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to structures shall be done in such a manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the structure would be unimpaired.

#### PRESERVATION BRIEF #32 ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility modifications should be in scale with the historic property, visually compatible, and whenever possible, reversible. Reversible means that if the new feature were removed at a later date, the essential form and integrity of the property would be unimpaired. The design of new features should also be differentiated from the design of the historic property so that the evolution of the property is evident.

Ramps can be faced with a variety of materials, including wood, brick, and stone. Often the type and quality of the materials determines how compatible a ramp design will be with a historic property. Unpainted pressure-treated wood should not be used to construct ramps because it usually appears temporary and is not visually compatible with most historic properties. Railings should be simple in design, distinguishable from other historic features, and should extend on foot beyond the sloped area.

#### **Photo's:**



**Picture c. 2019**



**Old concrete ribbon driveway**



**New concrete ramp and parking pad on front of structure**



**Newly poured concrete driveway without ribbon driveway**

**Staff recommendation:**

1. Staff does not recommend the approval of a permanent concrete ramp on the front of the structure. Ramps should be temporary and easy to remove without doing damage to the historic structure. Ramps should also be screened from view with shrubs or other plantings. Poured handicapped parking and sidewalk to allow for accessibility is acceptable.
2. Poured concrete aprons at entry of drive are acceptable. Parking, other than handicap pad, should be in rear of building only.

**City of Opelika**  
**Historic Preservation Commission**  
**Staff Report**

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**Agenda Item #:** 3  
**Meeting Date:** 09/11/2025  
**Action Requested:** COA: Install concrete ramp with iron rails  
**Location of Property:** 500 Geneva St; Geneva Historic District  
**Petitioner:** CJCF, LLC

**Resources:**

*Floyd-Carrington House, Circa 1900. One-story, frame cottage, combination hip and gable roof with tin and Eastlake chimneys, several gables with turned and scroll-sawn ornament wraparound porch with Ionic columns in pairs, and bracketed cornice, central door with oval light and transom.*

**Proposal:** The petitioner requests a COA for the following:

1. Install removable concrete block ramp on right side of structure with metal railing.
2. Drive and rear parking to remain natural with parking at rear.

**Proposed Guidelines:**

A. THE ENVIRONMENT:

1. The environment consists of all exterior features in the designated historic districts which are visible to the public and includes structures, outbuildings, landscaping, streets, appurtenances, trees, mass and spacing between structures, scale, mass, color and materials of buildings that give a neighborhood its distinguishing character and contributes to its historic district designation.
2. Significant landscape features such as public parks and gardens, street lighting, signs, street benches, sidewalks, streets, alleys and building setbacks that have traditionally been maintained in the historic district and that contribute to its historic character should be retained. Existing streets should not be widened. paving material should not be changed to a different texture and color. Inappropriate new streets or parking lots incompatible with the neighborhood should not be constructed. (updated 08/12/14)
3. New plant materials, fencing, walkways, housing and other outdoor lights, signs, benches, etc. should be compatible with the character of the neighborhood in size, scale, material and color.
4. Plant material should be maintained so as not to become a hazard to the public, public property or shall not be allowed to cause deterioration to structures.
5. Existing street trees should not be removed without a plan for replacement. (updated 08/12/14)

The following items DO NOT require a COA:

- Back yard Tree house, swing sets and trampolines
- Benches and other outdoor furniture and accessories
- Sculpture and another outdoor artwork
- Pools and patios
- Tree pruning, clearing of overgrown bushes, vines, saplings, etc.
- Tree removal (less than 4" diameter at breast height or diseased).
- Planting new trees, shrubs, ground cover, etc.
- Landscape edging
- Flower, vegetable and rock gardens
- Flowerpots, planters, window boxes, birdbaths, bird houses, etc.
- Adding gravel to existing driveways
- Patching deteriorated concrete or asphalt pavement, walks, steps, etc.

The following commonly requested projects require a COA:

- Changes to stone walls and other historic site features
- New or expanded parking areas/lots
- New and expanded driveways and walkways
- Staff approval for change of materials (i.e. gravel to concrete)

#### F. ADDITIONS:

1. Additions are areas that increase the living or working space of a structure. This does not include the addition of architectural elements.
2. Additions should be compatible with the architectural style of the structure and should not obscure, remove, conceal or replace significant architectural features of the existing structure. Additions should be compatible in scale, mass, proportion, materials, texture and color to the existing structure.
3. Additions should follow the guidelines for new construction

The following items DO NOT require a COA:

- Installation of temporary/emergency wheelchair ramps when they are not attached to the building

The following commonly requested projects require a COA:

- Installation of temporary wheelchair ramps (staff approval)

#### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to structures shall be done in such a manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the structure would be unimpaired.

#### PRESERVATION BRIEF #32 ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility modifications should be in scale with the historic property, visually compatible, and whenever possible, reversible. Reversible means that if the new feature were removed at a later date, the essential form and integrity of the property would be unimpaired. The design of new features should also be differentiated from the design of the historic property so that the evolution of the property is evident.

Ramps can be faced with a variety of materials, including wood, brick, and stone. Often the type and quality of the materials determines how compatible a ramp design will be with a historic property. Unpainted pressure-treated wood should not be used to construct ramps because it usually appears temporary and is not visually compatible with most historic properties. Railings should be simple in design, distinguishable from other historic features, and should extend on foot beyond the sloped area.

#### **Photo's:**



**Site Plan showing handicap parking pad, ramp, and additional parking**



**Site of proposed ramp on right side of house**



**Side and rear yard of proposed poured handicap parking spot & rear parking**



**Proposed block and concrete ramp with metal railing**



**Option 2: Wood ramp and railings like A-1 Employment**

**Staff recommendation:**

1. Staff recommend approval of wood or Trex ramp and railing to match the existing historic structure. Ramp shall be screened from view with shrubs or other plantings.
2. Staff recommend approval of poured handicapped parking pad to allow accessibility.
3. Staff recommend approval of natural or gravel drive and rear parking screened from public view.
4. Parking plan contingent on approval of Planning Department.

City of Opelika  
Historic Preservation Commission  
Staff Report



**Agenda Item #:** 4  
**Meeting Date:** 09/11/2025  
**Action Requested:** COA: Enclose Display Area & Remove Door  
**Location of Property:** 121 S. 9<sup>th</sup> St; Downtown Historic District  
**Petitioner:** Randy Brown

**Resources:**

*Museum of East Alabama: Circa 1970; one story concrete block building with brick veneer façade; aluminum and glass storefront. Conditionally Contributing.*

**Proposal:** The petitioner requests a COA for the following:

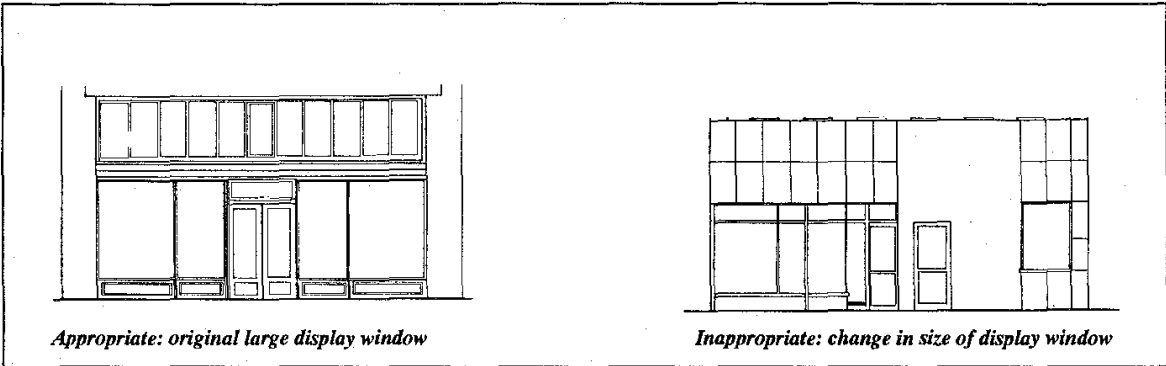
1. Enclose the display area (vacant lot) with wood-framed storefront windows and single wood door. Install a ribbed steel garage door on rear to allow for displays to be moved in/out.
2. Remove unused single door in middle of building; pull storefront forward to align with other windows.

**Proposed Guidelines:**

**STOREFRONT - #2.**

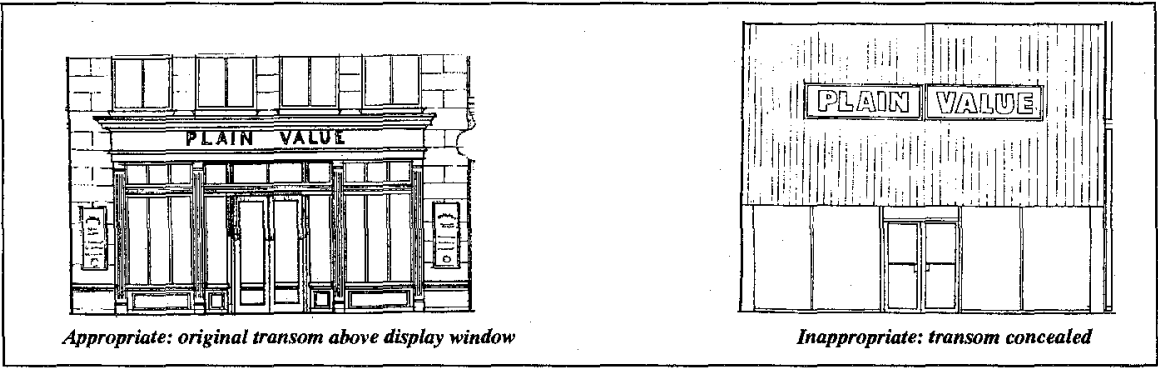
**Preserve existing historic storefronts. Retain characteristic storefront features.**

**DISPLAY WINDOW:** Maintain the original dimensions and transparent nature of the display window. Do not add small paned windows or reflective glass.



**COLUMNS:** Maintain cast iron columns and brick and stone piers which frame the storefront.

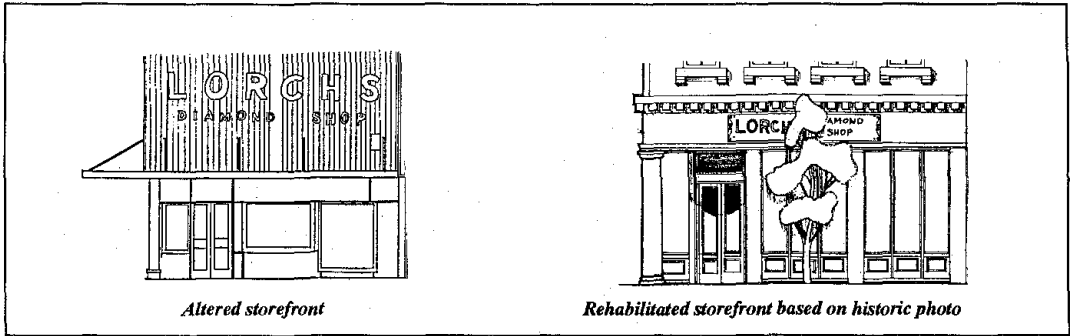
**TRANSOM:** Retain original shape and transparency of the transom. Do not place a sign over the transom, If an interior ceiling has been lowered below the transom, it should be recessed from the storefront. Do not place air conditioning units in the transom.



**RECONSTRUCTED STOREFRONT - #3**

Reconstruction of a historic storefront should be based on physical evidence and historical documentation such as photographs.

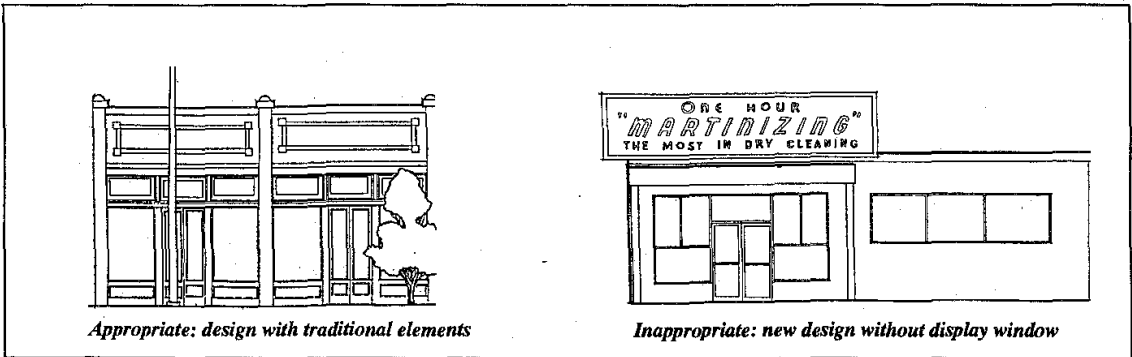
**RE-CONSTRUCTION:** Obtain historic photographs, post cards of downtown, and historical background about the building by contacting the historical society, library, and/or state archives.



**NEW STOREFRONT-#4**

If documentation of the original storefront does not exist, design a new storefront that is compatible with the materials, size, scale, and character -defining features of nearby buildings.

**NEW DESIGN:** Respect the original design of the building and visual character of the district. Do not add early colonial features, attempt to create a theme, or make a building more ornamental than it originally was. The new design should incorporate characteristic elements of a traditional storefront, including the display window, transom, recessed entrance, and bulkhead using compatible materials. (see Preservation Brief #11)



**REPLACEMENT:** Replacement windows are only recommended when historic windows cannot be rehabilitated. When replacement windows are installed, they should match the historic window in size, style, and materials and have the same number of panes. Interior storm windows are preferable to exterior ones. Wood windows are recommended, but painted metal windows may be acceptable. (see Preservation Brief #3)

## ***DOORS - #9.***

### **Preserve the original front doors and opening.**

**PRESERVATION:** The original size and shape of door openings should be maintained, not in-filled. Original doors and door hardware should be repaired and maintained. Replacement doors, when necessary, should be compatible with the original doors in terms of style, size, material, and glass panel configuration.

**NEW OPENINGS:** When the creation of new openings is necessary in order to meet fire codes, they should be located on sides or to the rear of buildings, rather than on the front. New openings, when permitted, should be compatible in scale, size, proportion, and placement to historic openings.

**CLOSING AN OPENING:** If the blocking of an opening is allowed, infill materials should be compatible with the building and should be placed 2” to 6” back from the building face. Use of fixed reflective glass is not recommended.

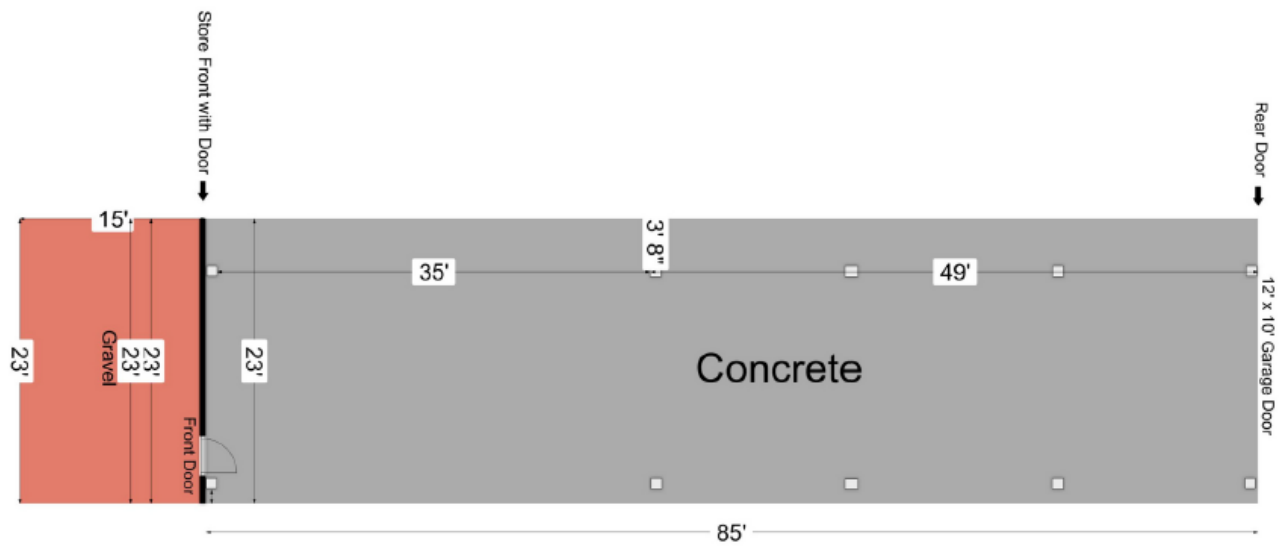
### **Photo's:**



**Current covered display area**



**Proposed new storefront**



Site Plan



Rear Garage Door



Current single door with small alcove entrance

**Staff recommendation:**

1. Staff recommend approval of new wood framed storefront with transom and full glass windows and steel garage door on rear.
2. Staff recommend approval of single wood door.
3. Staff recommend approval of removing center building door and pulling storefront forward for continuity.

**City of Opelika**  
**Historic Preservation Commission**  
**Staff Report**

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**Agenda Item #:** 5  
**Meeting Date:** 09/11/2025  
**Action Requested:** COA: Façade Renovation  
**Location of Property:** 913 S. Railroad Ave; Downtown Historic District  
**Petitioner:** Paul Gibson-Studio BGP Architects

**Resources:**

*913 (915) Venable's Find Foods: after 1924; one story brick load bearing wall construction; pilaster and corbelled parapet has recessed panels; some original woodwork. Glass and metal frames at pedestrian level date from a later period. Contributing Resource.*

*913 ½ Carol's Attic: after 1924; one story brick load bearing wall construction; pilaster and corbelled parapet has recessed panels; some original woodwork. Glass and metal frames at pedestrian level date from a later period. Contributing Resource.*

**Proposal:** The petitioner requests a COA for the following:

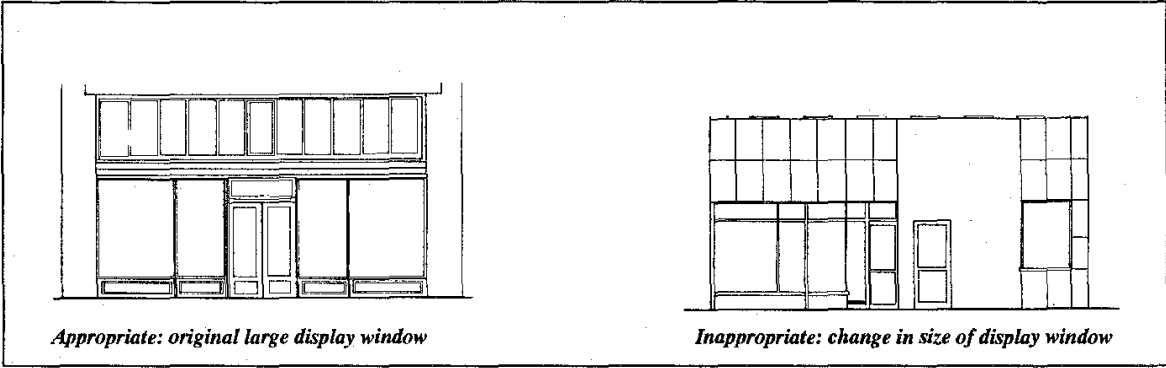
1. Exterior brick repairs, grout repointing and masonry cleaning. Buildings have been painted in the past and will be repainted to similar hue.
2. Replace existing storefront with historically appropriate wood trim, paneling and entrance doors. New window framing to be aluminum storefront with SDL transoms.
3. New canvas awnings on 1" tubular aluminum frames to be installed.
4. Interior repairs will include gutting of existing partitions and ceilings, repair of compromised floor and roof structures, and new plumbing, electrical, mechanical systems resulting in a vanilla box ready for office, mercantile or restaurant use.

**Proposed Guidelines:**

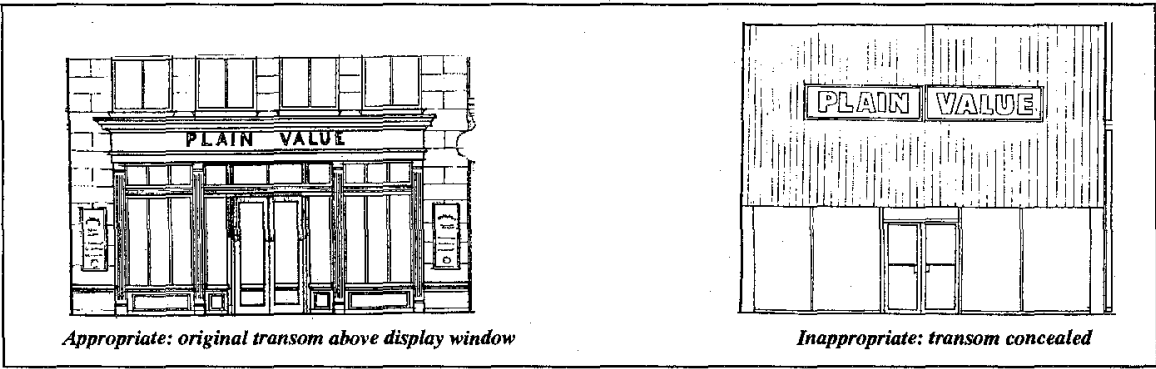
***STOREFRONT - #2.***

**Preserve existing historic storefronts. Retain characteristic storefront features.**

**DISPLAY WINDOW:** Maintain the original dimensions and transparent nature of the display window. Do not add small paned windows or reflective glass.



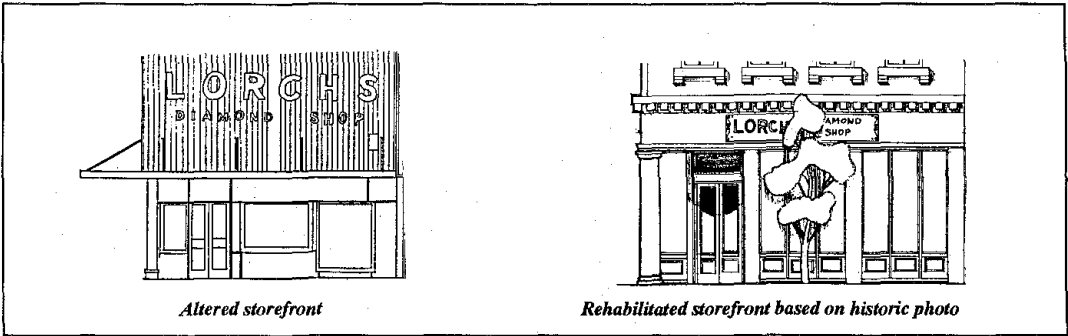
**COLUMNS:** Maintain cast iron columns and brick and stone piers which frame the storefront.  
**TRANSOM:** Retain original shape and transparency of the transom. Do not place a sign over the transom. If an interior ceiling has been lowered below the transom, it should be recessed from the storefront. Do not place air conditioning units in the transom.



### RECONSTRUCTED STOREFRONT-#3

Reconstruction of a historic storefront should be based on physical evidence and historical documentation such as photographs.

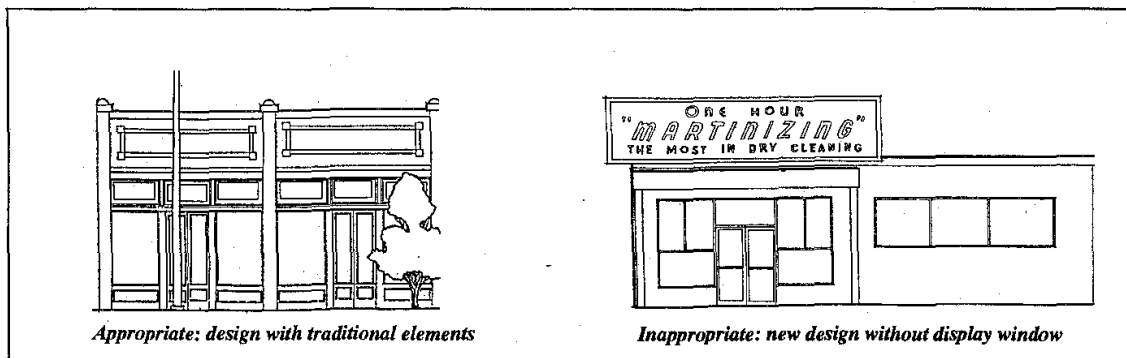
**RE-CONSTRUCTION:** Obtain historic photographs, post cards of downtown, and historical background about the building by contacting the historical society, library, and/or state archives.



### NEW STOREFRONT-#4

If documentation of the original storefront does not exist, design a new storefront that is compatible with the materials, size, scale, and character -defining features of nearby buildings.

**NEW DESIGN:** Respect the original design of the building and visual character of the district. Do not add early colonial features, attempt to create a theme, or make a building more ornamental than it originally was. The new design should incorporate characteristic elements of a traditional storefront, including the display window, transom, recessed entrance, and bulkhead using compatible materials. (see Preservation Brief #11)

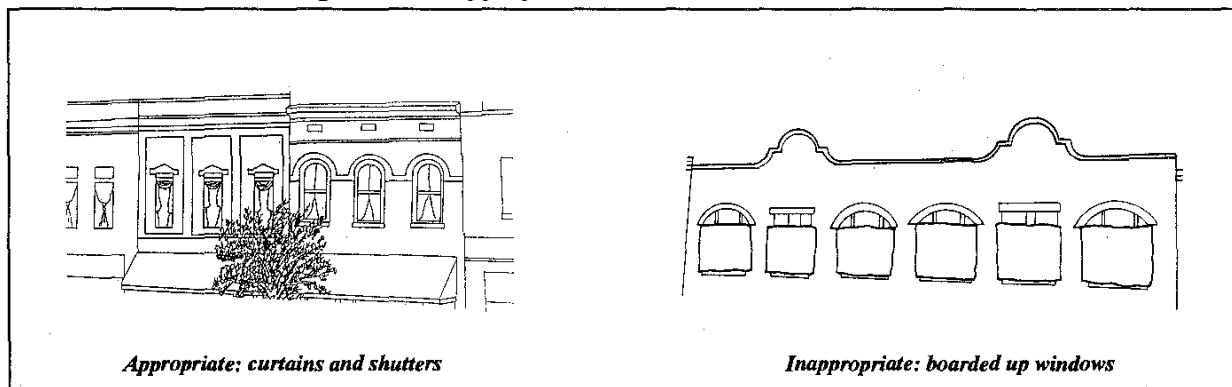


## UPPER STORY WINDOWS- #7.

### Preserve the size, shape, details, and transparency of upper story windows.

**PRESERVATION:** The glass, sash, hardware, and window surrounds, including the lintel or decorative window hoods, should be preserved and maintained. Add shutters to the exterior only if they originally existed. Shutters should be operable or should at least appear to be operable; when closed over an opening, they should fit the size of the opening. (see Preservation Brief #9, 10)

**RE-ESTABLISHMENT:** Consider reopening closed or blocked windows. In some cases, closed exterior shutters may be used to define original window dimensions. Instead of boarding up windows when the second story is not in use, hang curtains or interior shutters to give the building an occupied appearance. Reflective and dark, tinted glass is not appropriate.



**REPLACEMENT:** Replacement windows are only recommended when historic windows cannot be rehabilitated. When replacement windows are installed, they should match the historic window in size, style, and materials and have the same number of panes. Interior storm windows are preferable to exterior ones. Wood windows are recommended but painted metal windows may be acceptable. (see Preservation Brief #3)

## DOORS - #9.

### Preserve the original front doors and opening.

**PRESERVATION:** The original size and shape of door openings should be maintained, not in-filled. Original doors and door hardware should be repaired and maintained. Replacement doors, when necessary, should be compatible with the original doors in terms of style, size, material, and glass panel configuration.

**NEW OPENINGS:** When the creation of new openings is necessary in order to meet fire codes, they should be located on sides or to the rear of buildings, rather than on the front. New openings, when permitted, should be compatible in scale, size, proportion, and placement to historic openings.

**CLOSING AN OPENING:** If the blocking of an opening is allowed, infill materials should be compatible with the building and should be placed 2" to 6" back from the building face. Use of fixed reflective glass is not recommended.

## CANOPIES - #17.

### Maintain original canopies and balconies.

**PRESERVATION:** Although canopies, porches, and balconies are not commonly found on commercial buildings, when they exist, they are distinctive features. Original materials, details, shape, outline, and roof height should be retained. Enclosing canopies and balconies is not appropriate if it destroys the visual openness of the porch appearance. Concrete canopies or covered walkways are not appropriate.

**CANOPIES AND COLOR**

In the 1970s a continuous wood shingled canopy was attached to Opelika’s downtown buildings. This inappropriate canopy, which visually bisected the buildings and altered the character of downtown and was recently removed. Color is an inexpensive practical way to breathe new life into downtown buildings. Do not paint a brick building which is unpainted because it turns a low maintenance material into a high maintenance one. Although design review boards generally do not dictate color, the use of color can have a dramatic positive or negative impact on the district. Therefore, a few guidelines have been included. Merchants can receive color specifics through the Alabama Main Street office at the Alabama Historical Commission.

**Photos:**



**Building 913-913 ½ current photo**



**Proposed new storefront- this show flat metal awning-request is for canvas awning. Also, please note that “Railroad Junktion” has been pulled forward and is losing the historic recessed entry and wood bulkhead**



**Rendering of storefront**

**Staff recommendation:**

1. According to Preservation Brief #11, New storefront designs should not draw attention away from the historic building with its detailing but should respect the existing historic character of the overall building. Where an architecturally or historically significant storefront no longer exists or is too deteriorated to save, a new front should be designed which is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the building.
2. Replacing historic wood-framed storefronts with metal framing is generally not recommended. The original wood framing is integral to the historic character of the storefront and the overall building. Metal framing can alter the architectural features that make a building historic, potentially destroying its distinguishing characteristics. Instead, it is advisable to repair and retain the historic features using recommended treatments. This approach respects the building's historical significance and preserves its unique character.
3. Staff does not recommend pulling the recessed entry forward flush with adjacent buildings because this is a distinguishing characteristic of this building.
4. Applicant shall return with detailed specs for all doors, windows, lighting, materials, and signage for approval prior to installation.

**City of Opelika**  
**Historic Preservation Commission**  
**Staff Report**

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**Agenda Item #:** 6  
**Meeting Date:** 09/11/2025  
**Action Requested:** COA: Demolition and New Construction  
**Location of Property:** 917 S. Railroad Ave; Downtown Historic District  
**Petitioner:** Paul Gibson-Studio BGP Architects

**Resources:**

*Salvation Army: circa 1880's; one story brick load bearing wall construction; new brick façade; most of pedestrian level woodwork is original. Brand new store sign, awnings, and pendent lights. Conditionally Contributing.*

**Proposal:** The petitioner requests a COA for the following:

1. Demolition of the existing building and construction of two-story brick masonry façade in keeping with eight, proportions and masonry detailing of adjoining (913) building. Construction of a permanent metal canopy to extend 5ft over the right of way.
2. Construction of a 3<sup>rd</sup> story set back ~10ft from façade to maintain street level massing of adjoining (913) building. The 3<sup>rd</sup> floor will be primarily metal panel and glass construction.
3. First floor will consist of three (3) retail spaces fronting S. Railroad Ave, a street entrance to the apartment units, and five (5) ground floor apartments facing the rear, southeast, and courtyard, southwest.
4. The southwest elevation to be a combination of brick and metal panel to match façade. Southeast elevation will be primarily metal panel.

**Proposed Guidelines:**

***DEMOLITION - #32.***

**Historic buildings should not be demolished.**

**NEGLECT:** Property owners should not allow their buildings to deteriorate by failing to provide ordinary maintenance. This is considered to be demolition by neglect. When failure to maintain a property creates a public safety hazard, the city may condemn the property. Depending on local law, the city may stabilize the building at the owner's expense.

**ECONOMIC HARDSHIP:** If a request for demolition based on economic hardship is documented in a financial report detailing the costs of rehabilitation and evidencing that the existing building is incapable of producing a reasonable economic return on the investment, then the demolition may be approved.

**STRUCTURAL INSTABILITY:** If a request for demolition is based on structural instability or deterioration, a technical report, prepared by an architect or professional engineer, should be submitted. This should detail the nature and extent of the specific problems and provide cost estimates for their correction.

**CONSTRUCTION PLANS:** An application for demolition should be accompanied by a complete plan for the new development proposed for the site, a timetable, a budget for both the demolition and new construction, and evidence that adequate financing is available.

**DOCUMENTATION:** Prior to demolition, the building should be documented by measured drawings and photographs of the building’s elevation and architectural features. Parts and materials should be salvaged and recycled if possible.

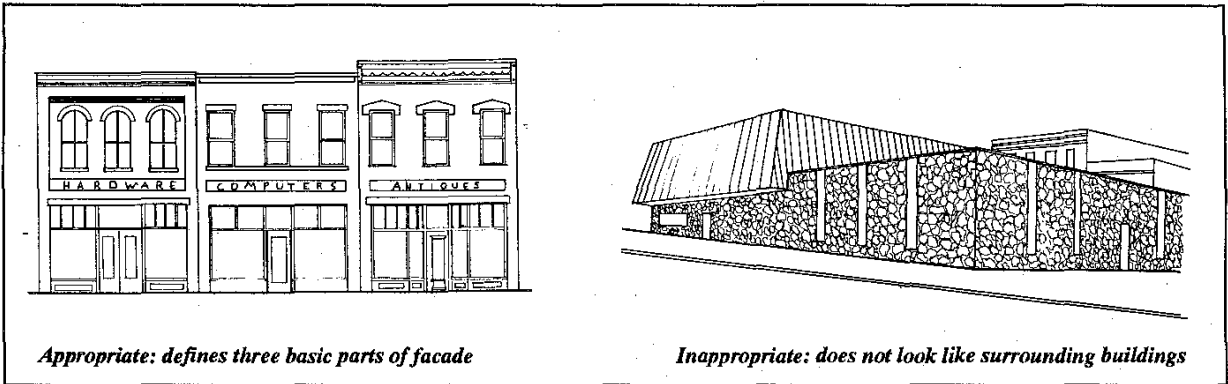
**PUBLIC SAFETY:** When in the interest of public safety, the removal of part of a building or complex may be required.

**NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS:** Demolition may be appropriate when a building has lost its integrity of design or is not a contributing building within the historic district, and its removal would result in a more positive effect on the district. In such cases, new construction should relate better to the historic district than the existing building. The requirements listed above should be satisfied, if applicable.

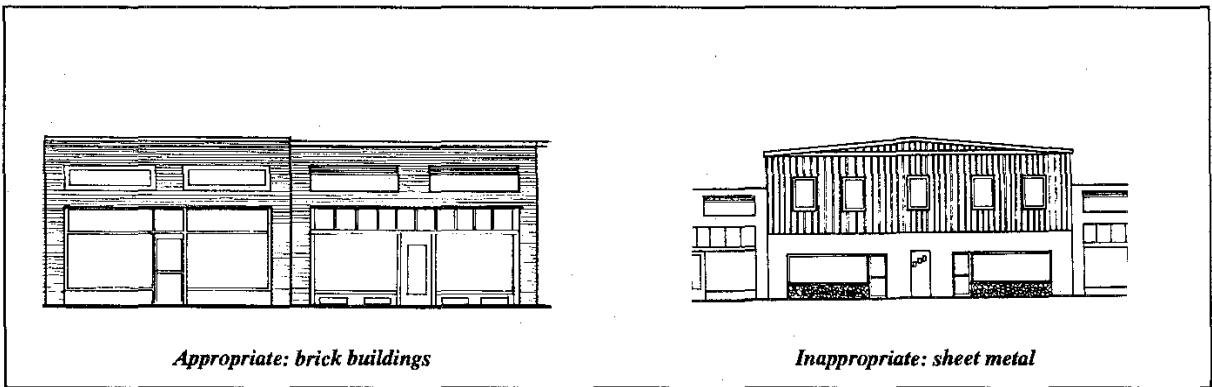
***NEW CONSTRUCTION - #29.***

**New construction should be compatible with neighboring buildings.**

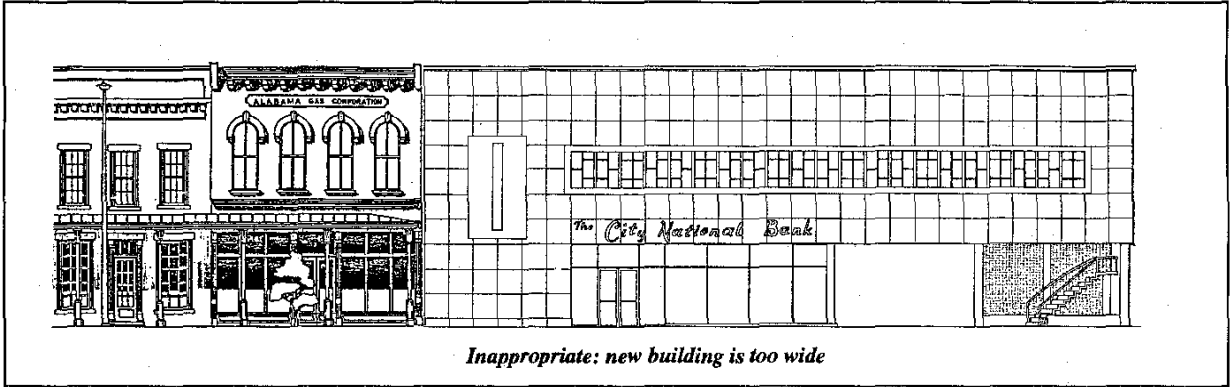
**COMPOSITION:** New buildings should define the three basic divisions of a commercial facade: a top which is typically a flat roof with a parapet and decorative cornice; a middle area defined by the upper story windows which are vertical and regularly placed; and a bottom which is transparent and has the elements of a storefront, including a bulkhead, a display window, and a transom.



**MATERIALS:** New materials should relate to historic materials in terms of texture, scale, color, and composition. New buildings should utilize the same materials as those on existing historic structures. Masonry, particularly brick, is an appropriate material. Inappropriate materials are plywood, composition panel, plastic, imitation brick or stone, vinyl or synthetic siding, sheet metal, and stone veneer. Neither stucco nor concrete block impart the same scale or texture as brick.



**SIZE / SCALE:** New buildings should be in scale with existing buildings. This means that they should not be appreciably taller, shorter, wider, or narrower than the buildings adjacent to them. Multi—story buildings should have a vertical emphasis, meaning that they should be taller than they are wide. The scale of key elements and details should refer to nearby buildings.

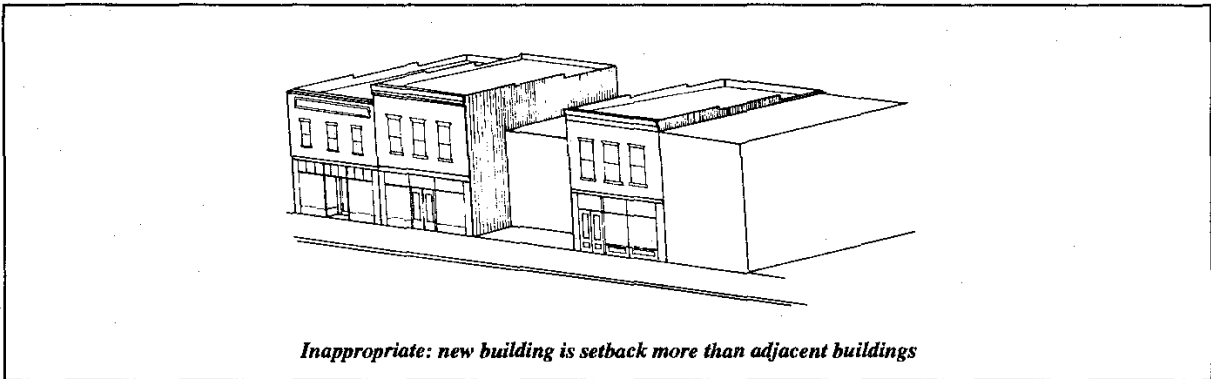


**RHYTHM OF OPENINGS:** The design, scale, and placement of openings in buildings, which provide a visual rhythm along the street, should be continued. Walls should be divided into bays by windows. New construction should avoid creating long unrelieved expanses of wall along the street. Window openings should be vertically proportioned and placed symmetrically on the facade. They should be slightly recessed back from the surface. Windows should be defined by sills, lintels, or decorative surrounds.



**ORIENTATION / ALIGNMENT:** Orientation of new construction should match that of existing adjacent buildings. Facades should face the same direction as those of neighboring buildings. The similar heights of buildings are emphasized by the alignment of cornices and/or horizontal bands of second story windows. New construction should continue the visual continuity of horizontal elements.

**SETBACK / SPACING:** New buildings should conform with adjacent or surrounding buildings in terms of their setback and the spacing between buildings. Historically, blocks of commercial buildings directly fronting the sidewalk are attached to each other, sharing a party wall. New buildings should create a continuously walled complex that holds the lines of the streets. Generally, avoid buildings designed as free-standing objects.



**STYLE:** The design of new buildings should complement existing historical architecture rather than attempt to imitate it. The new construction should be distinguishable from the old so that the evolution of the Main Street district can be visually read. New designs should creatively draw on the important characteristics of existing buildings.

**LANDSCAPE:** Site planning should respect the precedents set by other buildings in the block. In areas where many trees form a bower across the streets, new plantings should be planned to achieve a similar effect. For walls, fences, and paving, use materials consistently found in the district. (refer to Design Guideline #22)

Photos:



Current building with newer brick façade and entry



Building as show on 2007 Google Maps



Proposed New Construction



**Proposed New Construction**

**Staff recommendation:**

1. This Conditionally Contributing building appears to have been updated and possibly refaced with brick at some point. According to the State Historic Preservation office, the category of Conditionally Contributing no longer exists. Structures are now designated as either Contributing or Non-Contributing.
2. The Commission should consider the following guidelines during preliminary review:
  - New materials should relate to historic materials in terms of texture, scale, composition and utilize the same materials as those on existing historic structures.
  - New buildings should define the three basic divisions of a commercial façade: a top which is typically a flat roof with a parapet and decorative cornice; a middle area defined by the upper story windows which are vertical and regularly placed; and a bottom which is transparent and has the elements of a storefront, including bulkhead, a display window, and a transom.
  - New designs should creatively draw on the important characteristics of existing buildings.
  - New buildings should be in scale with existing buildings. They should not be appreciably taller, shorter, wider, or narrower than the buildings adjacent to them. The scale of key elements and details should refer to nearby buildings.
  - The design, scale, and placement of openings, which provide a visual rhythm along the street, should be continued. Walls should be divided into bays by windows. New construction should avoid creating long unrelieved expanses of wall along the street. Window openings should be vertically proportioned and placed symmetrically on the façade. Windows should be defined by sills, lintels, or decorative surrounds.
3. Applicant shall return with detailed specs for all doors, windows, lighting, materials, and signage for approval prior to installation.

**City of Opelika**  
**Historic Preservation Commission**  
**Staff Report**

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**Agenda Item #:** 7  
**Meeting Date:** 09/11/2025  
**Action Requested:** COA: Demolition and New Construction  
**Location of Property:** 921 S. Railroad Ave; Downtown Historic District  
**Petitioner:** Paul Gibson-Studio BGP Architects

**Resources:**

*Circa 1950's; one story building with brick load bearing wall construction with solid brick parapet; pedestrian level glass and metal storefront. Conditionally Contributing.*

**Proposal:** The petitioner requests a COA for the following:

1. Demolition of the existing building and construction of two-story brick masonry façade in keeping with eight, proportions and masonry detailing of adjoining (913) building. Construction of a permanent metal canopy to extend 5ft over the right of way.
2. Construction of a 3<sup>rd</sup> story set back ~10ft from façade to maintain street level massing of adjoining (913) building. The 3<sup>rd</sup> floor will be primarily metal panel and glass construction.
3. First floor will consist of three (3) retail spaces fronting S. Railroad Ave, a street entrance to the apartment units, and five (5) ground floor apartments facing the rear, southeast, and courtyard, southwest.
4. The southwest elevation to be a combination of brick and metal panel to match façade. Southeast elevation will be primarily metal panel.

**Proposed Guidelines:**

***DEMOLITION - #32.***

**Historic buildings should not be demolished.**

**NEGLECT:** Property owners should not allow their buildings to deteriorate by failing to provide ordinary maintenance. This is considered to be demolition by neglect. When failure to maintain a property creates a public safety hazard, the city may condemn the property. Depending on local law, the city may stabilize the building at the owner's expense.

**ECONOMIC HARDSHIP:** If a request for demolition based on economic hardship is documented in a financial report detailing the costs of rehabilitation and evidencing that the existing building is incapable of producing a reasonable economic return on the investment, then the demolition may be approved.

**STRUCTURAL INSTABILITY:** If a request for demolition is based on structural instability or deterioration, a technical report, prepared by an architect or professional engineer, should be submitted. This should detail the nature and extent of the specific problems and provide cost estimates for their correction.

**CONSTRUCTION PLANS:** An application for demolition should be accompanied by a complete plan for the new development proposed for the site, a timetable, a budget for both the demolition and new construction, and evidence that adequate financing is available.

**DOCUMENTATION:** Prior to demolition, the building should be documented by measured drawings and photographs of the building’s elevation and architectural features. Parts and materials should be salvaged and recycled if possible.

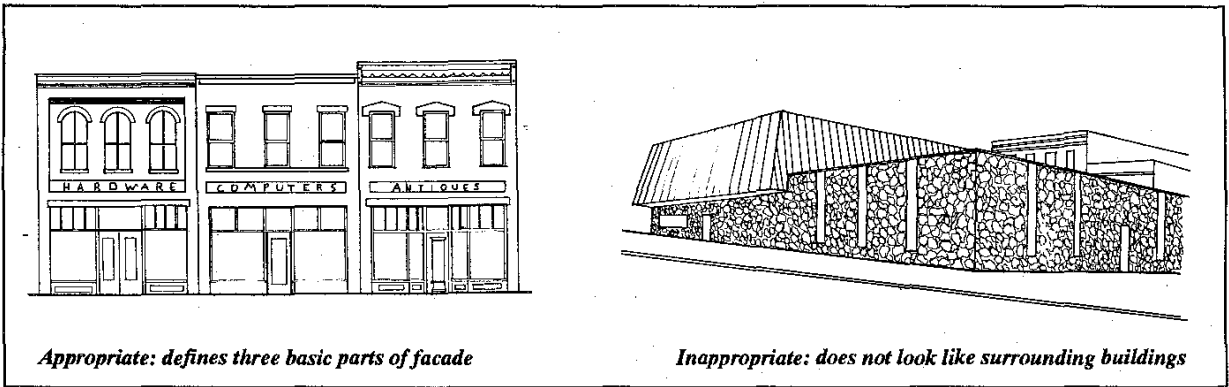
**PUBLIC SAFETY:** When in the interest of public safety, the removal of part of a building or complex may be required.

**NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS:** Demolition may be appropriate when a building has lost its integrity of design or is not a contributing building within the historic district, and its removal would result in a more positive effect on the district. In such cases, new construction should relate better to the historic district than the existing building. The requirements listed above should be satisfied, if applicable.

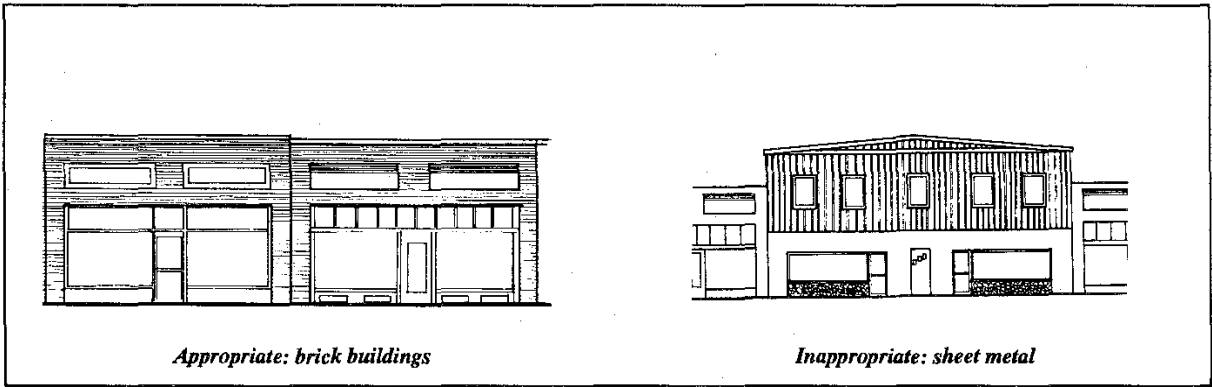
**NEW CONSTRUCTION - #29.**

**New construction should be compatible with neighboring buildings.**

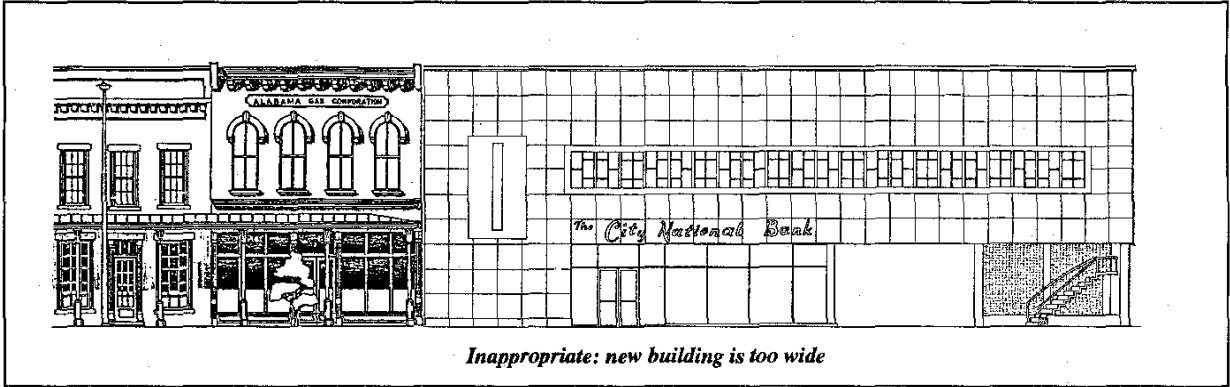
**COMPOSITION:** New buildings should define the three basic divisions of a commercial facade: a top which is typically a flat roof with a parapet and decorative cornice; a middle area defined by the upper story windows which are vertical and regularly placed; and a bottom which is transparent and has the elements of a storefront, including a bulkhead, a display window, and a transom.



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**SIZE / SCALE:** New buildings should be in scale with existing buildings. This means that they should not be appreciably taller, shorter, wider, or narrower than the buildings adjacent to them. Multi—story buildings should have a vertical emphasis, meaning that they should be taller than they are wide. The scale of key elements and details should refer to nearby buildings.

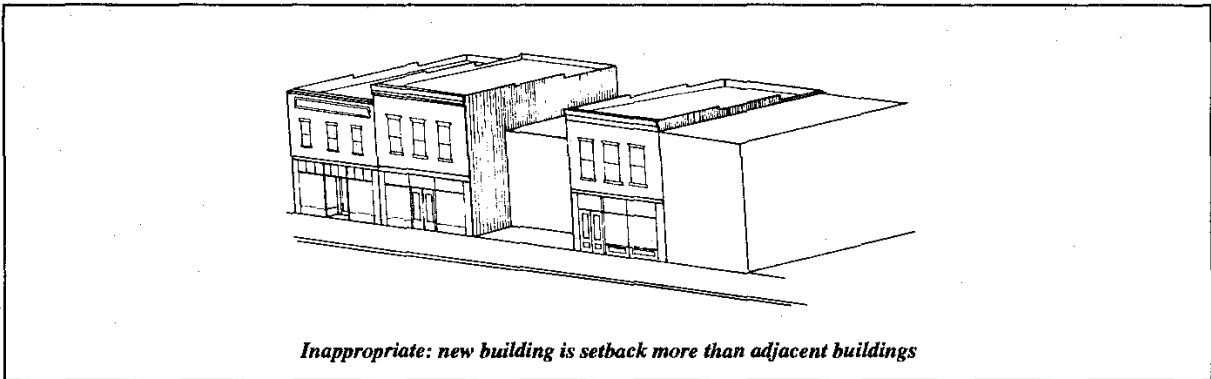


**RHYTHM OF OPENINGS:** The design, scale, and placement of openings in buildings, which provide a visual rhythm along the street, should be continued. Walls should be divided into bays by windows. New construction should avoid creating long unrelieved expanses of wall along the street. Window openings should be vertically proportioned and placed symmetrically on the facade. They should be slightly recessed back from the surface. Windows should be defined by sills, lintels, or decorative surrounds.



**ORIENTATION / ALIGNMENT:** Orientation of new construction should match that of existing adjacent buildings. Facades should face the same direction as those of neighboring buildings. The similar heights of buildings are emphasized by the alignment of cornices and/or horizontal bands of second story windows. New construction should continue the visual continuity of horizontal elements.

**SETBACK / SPACING:** New buildings should conform with adjacent or surrounding buildings in terms of their setback and the spacing between buildings. Historically, blocks of commercial buildings directly fronting the sidewalk are attached to each other, sharing a party wall. New buildings should create a continuously walled complex that holds the lines of the streets. Generally, avoid buildings designed as free-standing objects.



**STYLE:** The design of new buildings should complement existing historical architecture rather than attempt to imitate it. The new construction should be distinguishable from the old so that the evolution of the Main Street district can be visually read. New designs should creatively draw on the important characteristics of existing buildings.

**LANDSCAPE:** Site planning should respect the precedents set by other buildings in the block. In areas where many trees form a bower across the streets, new plantings should be planned to achieve a similar effect. For walls, fences, and paving, use materials consistently found in the district. (refer to Design Guideline #22)

Photos:



Current building with newer brick façade and entry



Proposed New Construction



Proposed New Construction

**Staff recommendation:**

1. According to the State Historic Preservation office, the category of Conditionally Contributing no longer exists. Structures are now designated as either Contributing or Non-Contributing.
2. The Commission should consider the following guidelines during preliminary review:
  - New materials should relate to historic materials in terms of texture, scale, composition and utilize the same materials as those on existing historic structures.
  - New buildings should define the three basic divisions of a commercial façade: a top which is typically a flat roof with a parapet and decorative cornice; a middle area defined by the upper story windows which are vertical and regularly placed; and a bottom which is transparent and has the elements of a storefront, including bulkhead, a display window, and a transom.
  - New designs should creatively draw on the important characteristics of existing buildings.
  - New buildings should be in scale with existing buildings. They should not be appreciably taller, shorter, wider, or narrower than the buildings adjacent to them. The scale of key elements and details should refer to nearby buildings.
  - The design, scale, and placement of openings, which provide a visual rhythm along the street, should be continued. Walls should be divided into bays by windows. New construction should avoid creating long unrelieved expanses of walls along the street. Window openings should be vertically proportioned and placed symmetrically on the façade. Windows should be defined by sills, lintels, or decorative surrounds.
3. Applicant shall return with detailed specs for all doors, windows, lighting, materials, and signage for approval prior to installation.

**City of Opelika**  
**Historic Preservation Commission**  
**Staff Report**

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**Agenda Item #:** 8  
**Meeting Date:** 09/11/2025  
**Action Requested:** COA: Rear Demolition and Façade Renovation  
**Location of Property:** 923 S. Railroad Ave; Downtown Historic District  
**Petitioner:** Paul Gibson-Studio BGP Architects

**Resources:**

*Ronald Bagen's Studio: circa 1885; one story brick load bearing wall construction with solid brick parapet; new brick façade; glass and metal frame store front. Conditionally Contributing.*

**Proposal:** The petitioner requests a COA for the following:

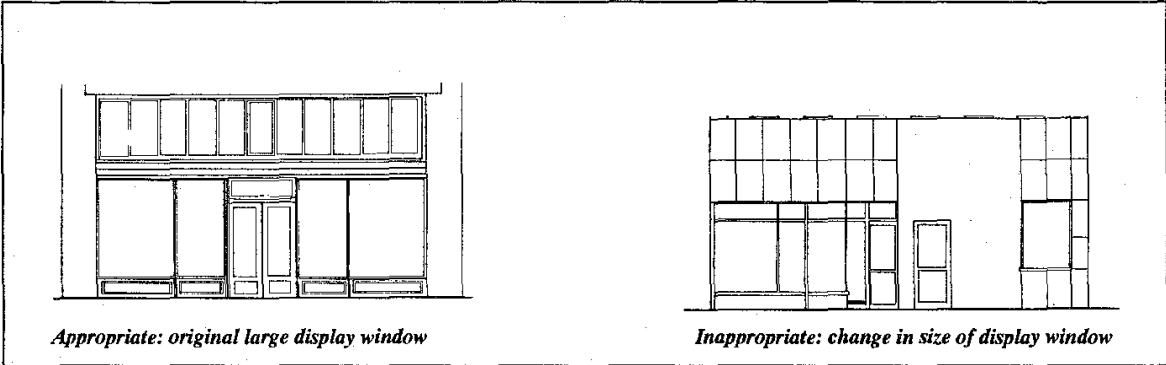
1. Exterior brick repairs, grout repointing and masonry cleaning. Building has been painted in the past and will be repainted.
2. Replacement of existing storefront with historically appropriate wood trim, paneling and entrance doors. New window framing to be aluminum storefront with SDL transoms.
3. New canvas awnings on 1" tubular aluminum frames to be installed.
4. Addition of a second story to include dining/bar facilities and a large, partially covered rooftop terrace. As with 917 & 921, the additional story will be set back from S. Railroad Avenue to maintain the historic street level parapet relationship.
5. Interior repairs will include gutting of existing partitions and ceilings, and replacement of existing wood floor and roof structure with concrete slab on grade and steel roof framing.
6. Addition of two stairs and an elevator.
7. Installation of three (3) new openings on the southwest elevation facing S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street.
8. Demolition of 1,042 SF brick addition on the southeast corner that is facing S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street.

**Proposed Guidelines:**

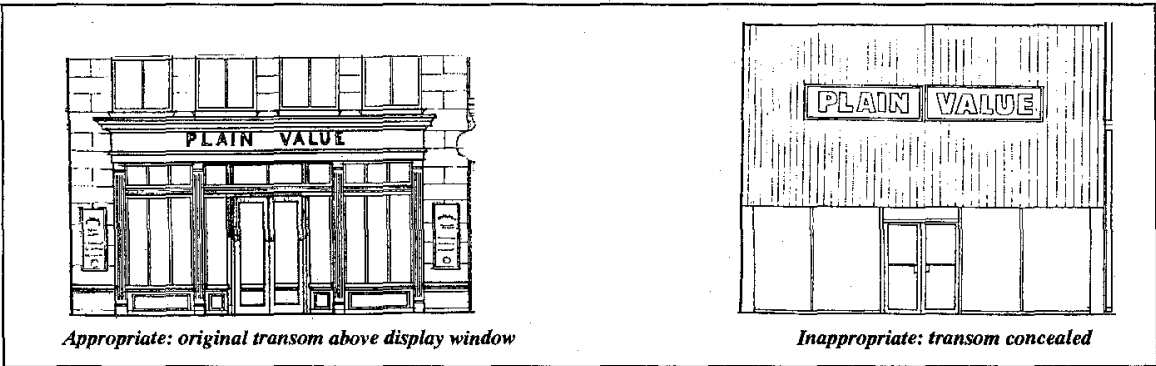
**STOREFRONT - #2.**

**Preserve existing historic storefronts. Retain characteristic storefront features.**

**DISPLAY WINDOW:** Maintain the original dimensions and transparent nature of the display window. Do not add small paned windows or reflective glass.



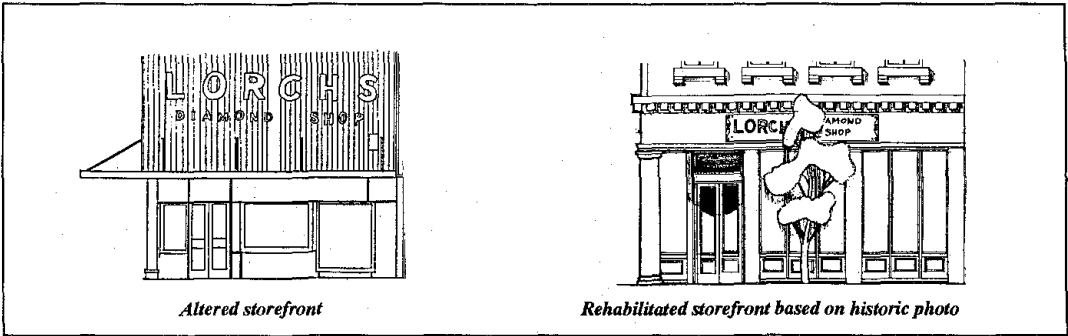
**COLUMNS:** Maintain cast iron columns and brick and stone piers which frame the storefront.  
**TRANSOM:** Retain original shape and transparency of the transom. Do not place a sign over the transom. If an interior ceiling has been lowered below the transom, it should be recessed from the storefront. Do not place air conditioning units in the transom.



### RECONSTRUCTED STOREFRONT - #3

Reconstruction of a historic storefront should be based on physical evidence and historical documentation such as photographs.

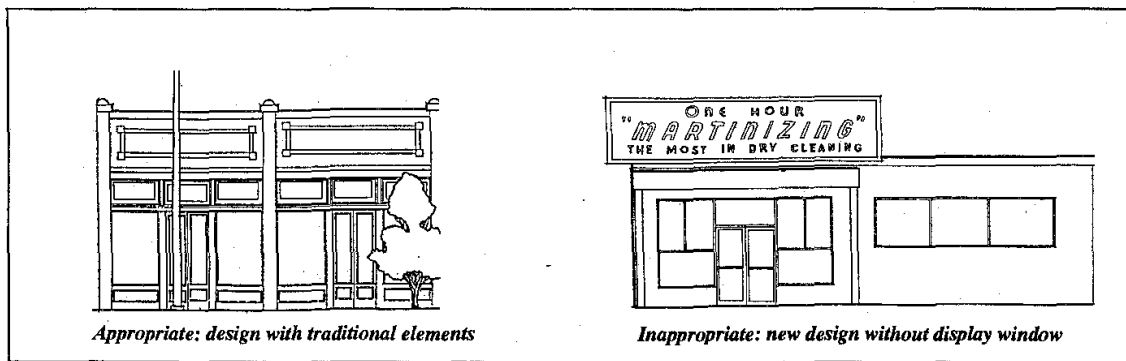
**RE-CONSTRUCTION:** Obtain historic photographs, post cards of downtown, and historical background about the building by contacting the historical society, library, and/or state archives.



### NEW STOREFRONT-#4

If documentation of the original storefront does not exist, design a new storefront that is compatible with the materials, size, scale, and character -defining features of nearby buildings.

**NEW DESIGN:** Respect the original design of the building and visual character of the district. Do not add early colonial features, attempt to create a theme, or make a building more ornamental than it originally was. The new design should incorporate characteristic elements of a traditional storefront, including the display window, transom, recessed entrance, and bulkhead using compatible materials. (see Preservation Brief #11)

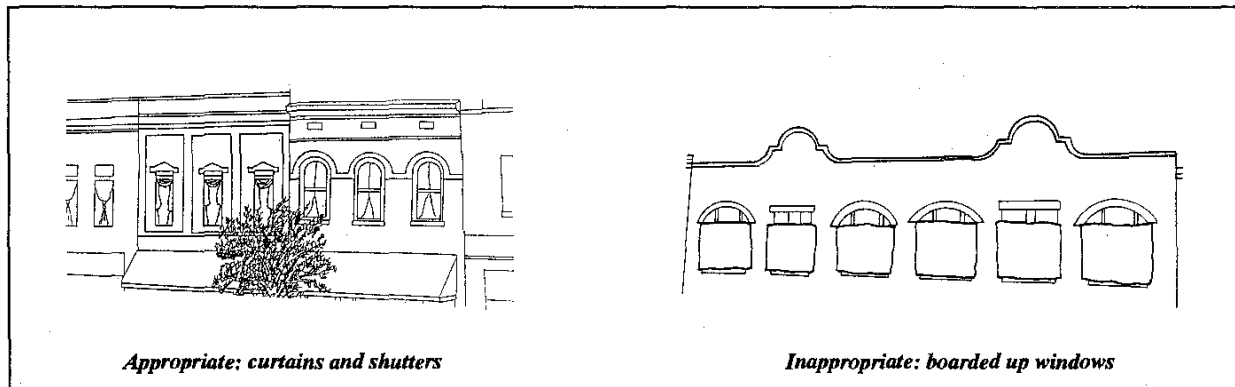


## UPPER STORY WINDOWS- #7.

### Preserve the size, shape, details, and transparency of upper story windows.

**PRESERVATION:** The glass, sash, hardware, and window surrounds, including the lintel or decorative window hoods, should be preserved and maintained. Add shutters to the exterior only if they originally existed. Shutters should be operable or should at least appear to be operable; when closed over an opening, they should fit the size of the opening. (see Preservation Brief #9, 10)

**RE-ESTABLISHMENT:** Consider reopening closed or blocked windows. In some cases, closed exterior shutters may be used to define original window dimensions. Instead of boarding up windows when the second story is not in use, hang curtains or interior shutters to give the building an occupied appearance. Reflective and dark, tinted glass is not appropriate.



**REPLACEMENT:** Replacement windows are only recommended when historic windows cannot be rehabilitated. When replacement windows are installed, they should match the historic window in size, style, and materials and have the same number of panes. Interior storm windows are preferable to exterior ones. Wood windows are recommended, but painted metal windows may be acceptable. (see Preservation Brief #3)

## DOORS - #9.

### Preserve the original front doors and opening.

**PRESERVATION:** The original size and shape of door openings should be maintained, not in-filled. Original doors and door hardware should be repaired and maintained. Replacement doors, when necessary, should be compatible with the original doors in terms of style, size, material, and glass panel configuration.

**NEW OPENINGS:** When the creation of new openings is necessary in order to meet fire codes, they should be located on sides or to the rear of buildings, rather than on the front. New openings, when permitted, should be compatible in scale, size, proportion, and placement to historic openings.

**CLOSING AN OPENING:** If the blocking of an opening is allowed, infill materials should be compatible with the building and should be placed 2" to 6" back from the building face. Use of fixed reflective glass is not recommended.

## CANOPIES - #17.

### Maintain original canopies and balconies.

**PRESERVATION:** Although canopies, porches, and balconies are not commonly found on commercial buildings, when they exist, they are distinctive features. Original materials, details, shape, outline, and roof height should be retained. Enclosing canopies and balconies is not appropriate if it destroys the visual openness of the porch appearance. Concrete canopies or covered walkways are not appropriate.

## CANOPIES AND COLOR

In the 1970s a continuous wood shingled canopy was attached to Opelika's downtown buildings. This inappropriate canopy, which visually bisected the buildings and altered the character of downtown and was recently removed. Color is an inexpensive practical way to breathe new life into downtown buildings. Do not paint a brick building which is unpainted because it turns a low maintenance material into a high maintenance one. Although design review boards generally do not dictate color, the use of color can have a dramatic positive or negative impact on the district. Therefore, a few guidelines have been included. Merchants can receive color specifics through the Alabama Main Street office at the Alabama Historical Commission.

## ***DEMOLITION - #32.***

### **Historic buildings should not be demolished.**

**NEGLECT:** Property owners should not allow their buildings to deteriorate by failing to provide ordinary maintenance. This is considered to be demolition by neglect. When failure to maintain a property creates a public safety hazard, the city may condemn the property. Depending on local law, the city may stabilize the building at the owner's expense.

**ECONOMIC HARDSHIP:** If a request for demolition based on economic hardship is documented in a financial report detailing the costs of rehabilitation and evidencing that the existing building is incapable of producing a reasonable economic return on the investment, then the demolition may be approved.

**STRUCTURAL INSTABILITY:** If a request for demolition is based on structural instability or deterioration, a technical report, prepared by an architect or professional engineer, should be submitted. This should detail the nature and extent of the specific problems and provide cost estimates for their correction.

**CONSTRUCTION PLANS:** An application for demolition should be accompanied by a complete plan for the new development proposed for the site, a timetable, a budget for both the demolition and new construction, and evidence that adequate financing is available.

**DOCUMENTATION:** Prior to demolition, the building should be documented by measured drawings and photographs of the building's elevation and architectural features. Parts and materials should be salvaged and recycled if possible.

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### **Photos:**



**Current front view**



**Current side view**



**Side view with rear addition**



**Rear View**



**Rear view for courtyard and parking**



**Proposed new storefront, canvas awnings, and addition**



Rendering of project



Rendering of completed project



Site plan with rear courtyard and parking; layout of rear entrance residential

**Staff recommendation:**

1. According to Preservation Brief #11, New storefront designs should not draw attention away from the historic building with its detailing but should respect the existing historic character of the overall building. Where an architecturally or historically significant storefront no longer exists or is too deteriorated to save, a new front should

be designed which is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the building.

2. Replacing historic wood-framed storefronts with metal framing is generally not recommended. The original wood framing is integral to the historic character of the storefront and the overall building. Metal framing can alter the architectural features that make a building historic, potentially destroying its distinguishing characteristics. Instead, it is advisable to repair and retain the historic features using recommended treatments. This approach respects the building's historical significance and preserves its unique character.
3. Staff recommends approval of canvas awnings.
4. Staff recommends approval of demolition of rear addition which is not original to the building and has no significance.
5. Staff recommends approval of new storefront windows facing S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street.
6. Applicant shall return with a landscape plan to block view of rear parking.
7. Applicant shall return with detailed specs for all doors, windows, lighting, materials, and signage for approval prior to installation.
8. All approvals are contingent on Planning Department review.