

# Painting



*The colors of brickwork and concrete used in this building are complemented by its painted wood elements.*

The color of a building comes from its construction materials: for example, red, brown, or ochre brickwork; grey or tan for stucco and stone. Sometimes, however, masonry walls were painted to provide added protection to soft brickwork or to conceal defects. Painting window sashes, doors, bulkheads, cornices, decorative elements, and other wood or metal items protects them from weathering and deterioration.

## DEFINITIONS

**Bulkhead:** The base of a storefront window or side-light adjacent to a door.

**Chalking:** A powdery surface condition resulting from the deterioration of paint.

**Cornice:** Decorated trim work placed along the top of a wall.

**Lintel:** A horizontal beam over an opening that carries the weight of the structure above.

**Sandblasting:** A potentially damaging procedure using a blast of air combined with particles of sand to clean hard surfaces.

**Sash:** The framework of a window that holds the paned of glass and slides vertically or pivots.

**Terne metal:** A metal alloy of lead and tin, used as a roofing material.

## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS...

*When choosing colors for painted features, it is important to relate them to an overall color scheme that is appropriate to your building and its neighbors.*

*Generally, the more elaborate a building's detailing, the more important the role that color plays.*

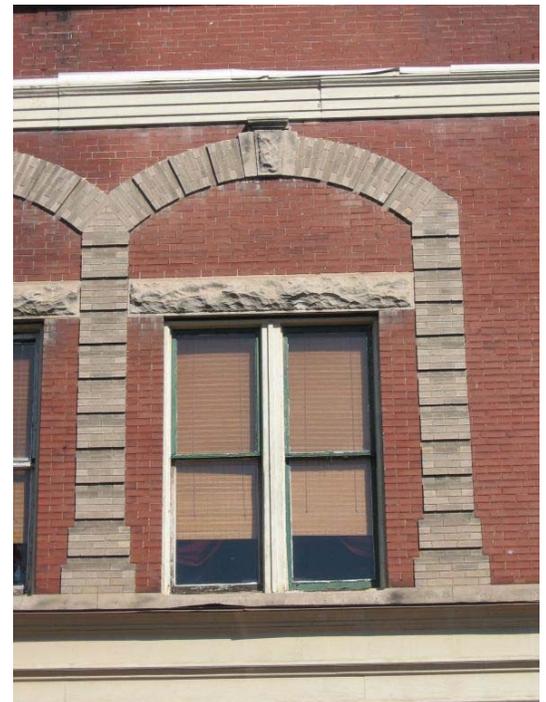
*Using appropriate paint removal and surface preparation techniques is just as important when protecting a building's exterior materials as the repainting effort itself.*

## GUIDELINES FOR PRESERVATION AND REHABILITATION

- **Recommended** actions or treatments are indicated by ✓.
- Actions or treatments **not recommended** are indicated by X.

## Retaining Important Features

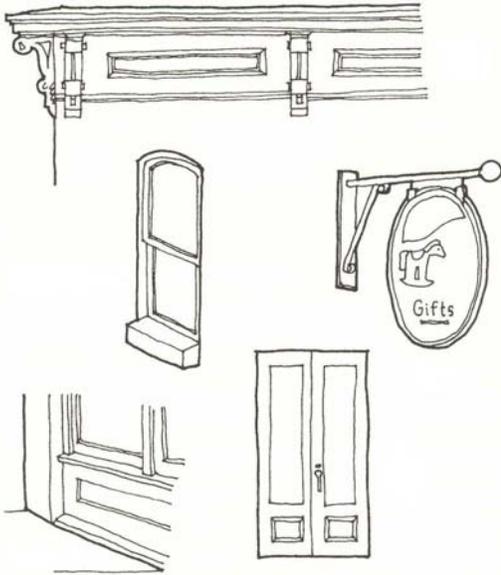
X Do not paint masonry buildings that have never been painted, particularly if they have decorative or multi-colored brickwork. Unpainted masonry requires less maintenance, and may be kept in good condition with minimal care for hundreds of years.



*Painting unpainted masonry should not occur. If this upper facade were painted, the contrast between the brick would be lost.*

✓ Keep painted all materials that rely on paint for protection or a traditional appearance, such as:

- wood (windows, doors, bulkheads, decorative trim, signs),
- pressed tin (cornices, details, signs),
- steel (columns, windows, doors, lintels, signs),
- cast iron (storefronts or features),
- concrete, concrete block, and other common building materials, and
- terne-metal roofs.



Many materials and decorative features of a commercial building rely on paint for their protection and traditional appearance. The cornice and sign below should continue to be painted as needed.



**X** Do not paint ornamental metals such as brass, bronze, copper, aluminum, or stainless steel.

**✓** Retain painted wall signs that are significant features of downtown commercial buildings. Carefully remove loose and flaking paint by hand scraping, then repaint with the appropriate paint type. Check with the city regarding any sign regulations, particularly if the sign is newly uncovered.



Painted wall signs are an important part of downtown Roanoke's character.

**✓** Identify the areas with the most serious paint problems when appropriate repainting cannot be done immediately. Correct any problems causing the paint deterioration, such as water penetration, scrape the affected areas, and repaint.

### Paint Removal from Woodwork

**X** Do not remove paint from historic woodwork unless it is peeling. Most other conditions such as mildewing, staining, or excessive chalking only require a thorough surface cleaning before repainting.



Paint in good condition, such as that covering these bulkheads, should not be removed.

**✓** Use hand scraping to remove peeling paint from historic woodwork or sand the paint to the next sound layer; then repaint with a high-quality exterior paint.

**X** Do not use the following techniques when removing paint from woodwork:

- chemical strippers, which may leave a residue or raise the grain of woodwork,
- propane torches, which may easily char the wood or vaporize the lead contained in older paints, and
- sandblasting or other abrasive techniques, which will destroy the profile of wood moldings and permanently erode wood surfaces.

### Paint Removal from Masonry

**X** Do not remove original paint from masonry. Many historic masonry buildings were painted to protect the soft brick used during the mid-nineteenth century or were painted later to hide incompatible alterations or repairs.

**✓** Remove paint from masonry only when it is evident that:

- paint is not original to the building (look at old photographs),
- removing the paint will not reveal de-

fects or alterations, and

- the process of removal will not damage the masonry.



*Paint may be removed from buildings like these only if it is certain that a painted surface was not original to the building, the paint is not protecting soft bricks, and the paint is not covering incompatible repair work. If paint is removed, gentle methods should be used.*

✓ Use the gentlest means possible to remove paint from masonry, such as chemical paint strippers developed specifically for use on masonry.

✓ Do not use abrasive techniques, such as sandblasting, that will permanently erode the surface of the masonry and make it subject to water damage.

### Paint Removal from Metal

✓ Use hand scraping and wire brushing to remove loose, flaking paint, and rust from metal.



*If paint becomes loose and flaky and must be removed from metal components such as this cornice, hand scrapers and wire brushes should be used.*

✓ Use abrasive techniques carefully, such as low-pressure, dry grit blasting on cast-iron elements to remove extensive paint buildup and corrosion; be careful to avoid damaging

adjacent materials.

✓ Use chemical strippers developed specifically for softer metals, such as tin and copper, to remove extensive paint buildup and corrosion. Do not use grit blasting, which may damage the finish of these metals.

### Developing Appropriate Color Schemes

✓ Choose a color that is similar to that of the existing building materials when it is necessary to paint an exterior wall.

✓ Express the individual character of a building by selecting a wall color that is compatible with those of existing buildings; the colors need not match exactly to be harmonious.

✓ Choose a limited number of colors that



*Choosing color schemes that are distinct but compatible with those of other buildings—such as these with a lighter body color and somewhat darker trim and accent colors—is the best way to promote architectural harmony.*

relate well to each other when painting a building. In most instances, two accent colors in addition to the main wall color are sufficient to highlight any façade. The major accent color should be compatible with the wall color and tie the upper and lower façades together. The minor accent should enhance small details. Recommended applications of the three colors are as follows:

- main color on exterior walls,
- major accent color on majority of trim—cornices, bulkheads, window frames, and sashes, and
- minor accent color on smaller decorative details—doors, storefront frame.

✓ Keep the appearance of a building with multiple storefronts unified through consistent treatment of the upper and lower façades. Windows, cornices, and wall sur-

faces should each be painted the same color throughout. Each storefront should relate to the overall building by using the same major accent color, but may express an individual identity by using a compatible minor accent color and appropriate signs or awnings.

✓ Investigate appropriate color schemes by



*Most color schemes for commercial buildings can be planned with three colors.*

consulting historic paint catalogs and historic photographs of the building or by scraping paint layers from the building itself.

✓ Consider the rear and side facades when planning a building's color scheme. Applying the same color scheme to the rear façade is a practical way of reinforcing the identity of a commercial establishment.

✗ Do not use too much color on the façade. Too many colors on details make the façade appear busy.



*Adopting a distinct color scheme for the storefront and upper floor, as the address on the left did, destroys the architectural unity of the building over all. Expressing a business's identity by selecting a different minor accent color, as the two addresses on the right did, is more successful.*