

HISTORIC CONSERVATION GUIDELINES

Mercantile Library Building, 414 Walnut Street

Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

General Terminology

Within the context of these historic conservation guidelines, the “Mercantile Library Building” refers to the building located at 414 Walnut Street. The building’s vertical emphasis, symmetry and restrained classically inspired ornamentation are defining characteristics of the Chicago Commercial Style design of the building, and preservation of these aspects is essential to its integrity. The primary facade of the building faces west on Walnut Street; the east façade is exposed above the second floor but of simpler character than the west façade and considered secondary; the south and north elevations abut other buildings, and are thus tertiary.

Intent and General Guidelines

The following guidelines are adapted and comply with the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation*. When a proposed change is not addressed by the guidelines, The *Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation, Interpreting the Standards Bulletins* and *Preservation Briefs* will be used as guiding documents.

These guidelines are intended to ensure that rehabilitation will maintain significant features of The Mercantile Library Building. Guidelines are intended not as strict rules but are to be used by the Historic Conservation Board as a guide to assess the compatibility and appropriateness of proposed rehabilitation changes. Reviews by the Historic Conservation Board are restricted to exterior changes proposed for this building. Repair and maintenance not changing significant features and clearly complying with the intent of these guidelines do not require board review. Interior alterations are not the purview of the Historic Conservation Board and are not subject to review.

The following general approaches are recommended:

1. **Repair and maintenance:** Ordinary repair and maintenance of like and kind for matching the original construction, where visible, and that does not change the appearance of the buildings, is acceptable under these guidelines. Rehabilitation may include preservation, restoration, reconstruction, or a combination of these, as appropriate and reasonable for the building.

2. **Maintenance.** Existing visible features that contribute to the overall character of the building in good condition shall be maintained and where possible, preserved or conserved. Damaged visible features that can be repaired shall be repaired rather than replaced wherever possible.
3. **Replacements.** Replacements of significant features damaged beyond repair, deteriorated beyond reasonable repair, or missing shall sensitively harmonize with characteristics of the original feature. Replication is appropriate, but not required.

Specific Guidelines

The following specific approaches to elements, features, and visible components are recommended:

1. **Materials:** Materials for visible features that are badly damaged, deteriorated beyond reasonable repair, or missing shall be replaced with materials or components that closely match the style, shape, color, treatment, and texture of the element replaced. Composition, type of joint, size of units, visible measures, placement, and detailing shall be appropriate for the building. Synthetic materials, where closely matching the existing characteristics, may be utilized.
2. **Door and Window Openings:** Among the important features of Mercantile Library Building are its window and door openings. The size and location of openings are an essential part of their overall design and an important feature of their architectural design. Original wall openings on primary facades shall not be significantly altered or filled in. On secondary facades, original wall openings shall not be significantly altered without consideration of their impact to the overall character of the original design.
3. **Doors and Window Sash:** The original doors and window sashes shall be repaired rather than replaced where feasible and where appropriate access and security can be achieved in compliance with building codes. If replacement of doors or windows becomes necessary due to deterioration or to replace missing or nonconforming units, new windows and doors on primary facades shall fill the original openings and be compatible with the building in size, scale, materials, configuration, style and color. Minor variations in mullion and sash frame dimensions of replacement windows may be considered. Vinyl replacement windows or glass-block windows shall not be used.
4. **Storefronts:** Nonconforming storefront features including doors, display windows, infill panels, canopies and awnings may be replaced with new materials compatible with the buildings design.
5. **Ornamentation:** Significant architectural features of the Mercantile Library Building include the following: granite door surround; terra cotta facing, cornices, colonettes; friezes; brick running-bond walls, pilasters; primary façade window openings. These features and other ornamental elements shall be preserved or conserved. Do not make replacements or substitutions of different scale, size, design, or incompatible materials. Replace ornamentation to match originals in character, scale, configuration,

style, size texture, and color. Some synthetic materials including fiberglass castings or composite materials may be considered.

6. **Roof:** Parapets and other architectural features that define the roofline of the building shall be preserved. On the primary facades, vents, skylights, rooftop utilities, and equipment, such as elevator mechanicals and new roof elements shall be placed or screened so they are inconspicuous from view.
7. **Painting:** Do not paint stone and masonry elements that have historically not been painted. Use colors that are appropriate to the building's age, history, and style.
8. **Outside Attachments:** Exterior light fixtures should be appropriate to the style of the building, or simple and contemporary. Mercury vapor, high—pressure sodium, and other light sources that impact distortions of color when illuminated are not appropriate to primary facades. Exterior light fixtures shall be mounted or constructed so as not to cast undue glare onto neighboring buildings or damage the building on which they are mounted. Signs are addressed under Site Improvements.

Additions and Exterior Alterations

Intent and General Guidelines

1. **Additions:** Additions shall follow new construction guidelines, codes, and regulations. Any addition shall be compatible in character with the original building, with sensitivity to existing massing and scale, site, and appearance within the building's existing context. Additions shall be sympathetic, may be complementary, but need not be imitative in design. Additions should be designed to relate architecturally, not overwhelming the original building. Rooftop additions should be set back to minimize visibility.
2. **Alterations:** Alterations shall follow construction guidelines for alternations, codes, and regulations. Alterations shall not change or alter significant architectural features on primary facades. On the secondary facades, alterations shall be designed to minimize impact on the overall character of the facade on which the alteration occurs.
3. **Appropriateness:** The appropriateness of design solutions for additions and alternations should include the following.
 - a. How well the proposed design for the addition or alteration relates to the building and the neighboring buildings.
 - b. How closely the proposed addition or alteration meets the specific intentions of these guidelines.

Site Improvements and Alterations

1. **Signs.** Signs should be designed for clarity, legibility, and compatibility with the building. Signs should not cover or obscure architectural features. Billboards and roof-top signs

are not permitted. Temporary signage is permitted without review by the Historic Conservation Board.

2. **Parking and paving.** Not applicable.
3. **Walls and Fences.** Not applicable.
4. **Landscaping.** Not applicable.
5. **Support Structures.** Not applicable.

Demolition

Any demolition, alterations, or modifications to the property and minimum maintenance requirements are governed by Section 1435-09: Alterations and Demolitions; Certificates of Appropriateness; Minimum Maintenance, of the Cincinnati Zoning Code, ordained by Ordinance No. 217-2012, §1, effective July 20, 2012. Any updates, modifications, or amendments to this section of the Cincinnati Zoning Code or legislation that supersedes Chapter 1435 of the Cincinnati Zoning Code which is established as the "Historic Preservation Code," shall be considered the governing law.