

# Roofs, Parapets, and Cornices

## ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR THE H-1 DISTRICT



Some district pressed-tin cornices are elaborate, displaying building titles or dates of construction.

The roof generally is not a dominant feature of a traditional commercial building unless the building is freestanding. Most often, the roof form – either gabled or a shall-pitched shed – is concealed behind a parapet, an extension of the masonry wall above the roofline. Parapets of commercial buildings frequently have a cornice at the top of the front façade. The cornice gives character to the skyline and sometimes includes the building's name or date of construction.

### IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS...

*A cornice is usually an important visual feature of a new or historic commercial façade.*

*Parapets help conceal mechanical equipment or other rooftop construction from pedestrian view.*

*Well-maintained roof and gutter systems help prevent the deterioration of other parts of a building.*

### GUIDELINES FOR PRESERVATION AND REHABILITATION

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

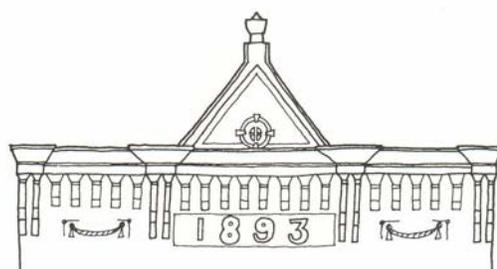
#### Retaining Important Features

✓ Retain the form, materials, and features of original or significant later roofs – particularly those visible from public rights of way

and important to a building's character.

✓ Retain existing parapets and cornices, as well as features associated with them, such as:

- copings and capstones,
- brick corbels, decorative tile, and terracotta,
- wood, pressed tin, and other applied cornices, and
- dates, building names, and other original identifying features.

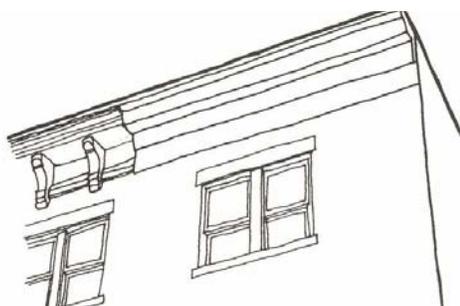


The variety of parapet and cornice treatments in downtown Roanoke characterize commercial buildings of different periods and uses.

#### Removing Inappropriate Treatments

✓ Remove inappropriate treatments, such as sheet metal, plywood, or other materials obscuring or covering decorative cornices.

✓ Remove mechanical equipment and other rooftop construction that are no longer functional, in poor condition, and visible from the street. Rooftop signs, unless they are historic, also should be removed.



Covering or removing a building's cornice, often because of maintenance concerns, inevitably results in a loss of character.

#### DEFINITIONS

**Capstone:** Any single stone in a coping.

**Coping:** The protective cap or top of a wall, often of concrete or stone.

**Corbels:** A series of projecting bricks or other masonry units, each unit stepping progressively farther forward with height.

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

**Parapet:** A wall that extends above the roofline.

**Terra cotta:** Hard, unglazed fired clay, used for ornamental work and roofing tiles.

## Repairing Damage

- ✓ Stabilize conditions when repairs to a roof, parapet, or cornice cannot be undertaken immediately.
- ✓ Repair cornices, brackets, or other features revealed after removing inappropriate cover-up materials.
- ✓ Repair deteriorated flashing, parapet copings, and roofing materials that may permit water penetration and damage cornices, parapets, or structural members.
- ✓ Ensure that roof drains, gutters, and downspouts are free of debris and conduct water away from the roof without damaging features such as parapets, cornices, masonry walls, and foundations.
- ✓ Explore replacement features made from a substitute materials when a missing feature cannot be replaced in kind.

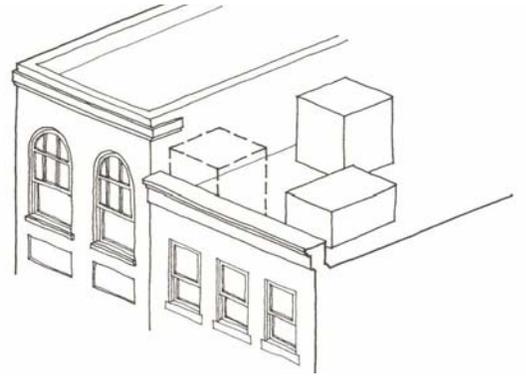
## Rehabilitation and Other Alterations

- ✓ Keep the form, slope, and features of a roof that is visible from the street.



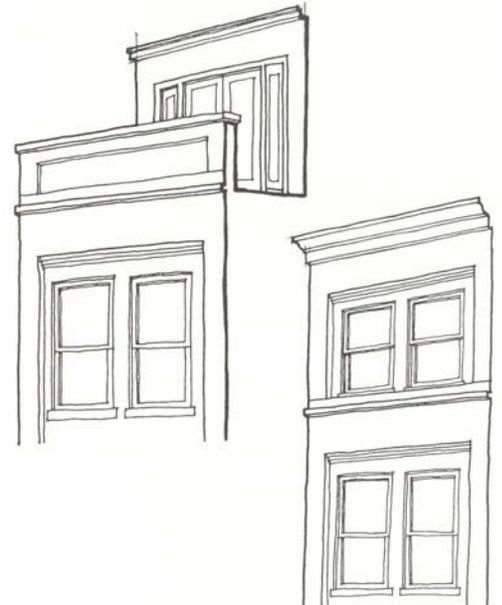
*This roof should retain its flat pitch if rehabilitation or other alterations are undertaken on the building.*

- ✓ Consider the addition of skylights when making roof alterations as a way of increasing the usefulness of upper-floor spaces, so long as the skylights are not visible from the street.
- ✗ Do not locate rooftop mechanical equipment at the roof's perimeter, making it visible from the street.



*Rooftop mechanical equipment should never be visible from ground level; make sure it either has a low profile or is set sufficiently back from adjacent parapet walls.*

- ✓ Undertake construction of additional stories or rooftop additions only if the new construction is:
  - in keeping with the character of a building's façade or
  - set back from the facade of the building so that it will not be visible from the street .



*Additional stories should be designed in keeping with a building's existing character, as on the right. If of a different design, they should be set back from the façade to reduce their visual impact, as on the left.*