

The Language of Building Preservation

In two months, Emporia Main Street will recognize Historic Preservation Month and the community members that ensure a sustainable community through good building practices and preservation activities. Buildings built 80 to 100 years ago, with good maintenance, were built to last almost indefinitely. Contrast that with today's building practices where some buildings are said to have 20 or 30 year life spans and it becomes apparent why historic preservation is so important. We simply do not have the resources to demolish and rebuild the city every two or three decades. The first step in building preservation is understanding, and to comprehend maintenance and revitalization you must first understand the Language of Building Preservation. We all know that buildings that are not maintained will detract from an entire area's aesthetics (while also hurting the business in the unmaintained building). Consider this a primer to allow for future conversations:



Above, you can see a very typical store front with a variety of descriptive words. Because this information is a scanned image from our Main Street library of information, some of the words are difficult to read, so please allow me to restate them here. On the left, the top section of a building is known as the "cap", followed by the "body" and then the "base". On the right, the top phrase is pointing to the "decorative cornice", "window hoods" are recognized next, followed by "masonry wall". The Kansas Main Street program points out the "Regularly Spaced Windows" that are a staple of most building designs and the "Recessed Panel (Good location for a sign board)" next. Directly above the storefront is the "Storefront Cornice". The "Transom Window" traditionally contained transom glass which diffused light throughout the store. Framing the store front were "Masonry Piers". A "Recessed Door" is surrounded by "Display Windows" which sits atop the "Bulkhead".

The Emporia Main Street Design Committee produced two documents which simplify some design concepts and fully explore the theory behind good design. Please check out the [Design Committee's Design Guidelines](#), and the [ABC's of Preservation by Emporia Main Street](#) (**due to a tech glitch, a couple of the pages are out of order**). Also, you can check out the [Community Initiated Development groups downtown design guidelines](#) which were adopted by the city council this summer.

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