

Design Guidelines – What, Why and How

We have talked about the façade grant process, the PSJRA-provided reimbursement of expenses to businesses, and the overall style of “Florida BayTown.” Today, let’s talk about the philosophy and goals of the design guidelines program and why the redevelopment agency is providing financial incentives for participation.

The design guidelines will help businesses improve their external appearance and are intended to be flexible, variable, and to encourage design freedom and diversity, while also encouraging coordination of a development style within the historic downtown. The original investment by business and the overall development patterns will be protected as well as enhanced. This is a voluntary program, with the goal for an all-around, high-quality in design that will attract increased retail- and tourist-oriented customers and enhance financial success.

Why do we need this program? Our Historic Downtown needs more customers. The people who makeup the 12,000-a-day traffic count along the 98 corridor need to have a reason to turn one block inland to explore. Increased and carefully planned traffic flow and pedestrian access to the historic downtown is a primary issue in the evaluation of proposed design guidelines.

The PSJRA will propose custom street signs to highlight the historic district. We will also propose creation of a grand entrance to the historic district by highlighting, for example, the intersection of Third and 98, which will beckon to those traveling along the 98 corridor to turn in and enjoy our unique, quaint, and beautiful downtown. Once they reach Reid Avenue or Williams Avenue or each side street, visitors must want to stay and explore.

We want people to want to stop, get out of their cars and walk around, with the end goal to make purchases and form relationships within Port St. Joe.

We envision welcoming, pedestrian-friendly features such as more shade (increased number of awnings and well-maintained overhangs) and pedestrian amenities, ample parking (encourage owners/employees to utilize alternate parking places), and alluring signage—both civic and business. For example, small “blade” signs with the name of the business that hangs perpendicularly above entrances are a wonderful way to keep visitors moving down the street to visit a particular business just by seeing the names, the beautiful signs, and the unique nature of each sign all the way down the block. Who wouldn’t want to know what is inside a store named “Persnickety,” “Port Side Trading,” Palm Tree Books,” Beach to Bay,” or “The Fuss,” and who would not want to sample the cuisine of restaurants called “Sisters,” “Penny’s Porch,” “Peppers,” or “Provisions.” Colors of buildings will harmonize and create a unified vision. This type of coordination of traffic, pedestrian access, and design results in an organized composition that will draw a larger customer base.

In short, we want the Historic District to be memorable and irresistible! And we invite all businesses to be a part of achieving this vision. If you would like to engage in discussion, please attend our special board meeting to discuss the role-out of this program on Monday, January 28, at 5 PM in City Hall, Commission Chambers. If you have questions, please call Gail Alsobrook at 850-229-6899 or email gail@CelebratePortSaintJoe.com.