



What is a Character-Defining Feature?

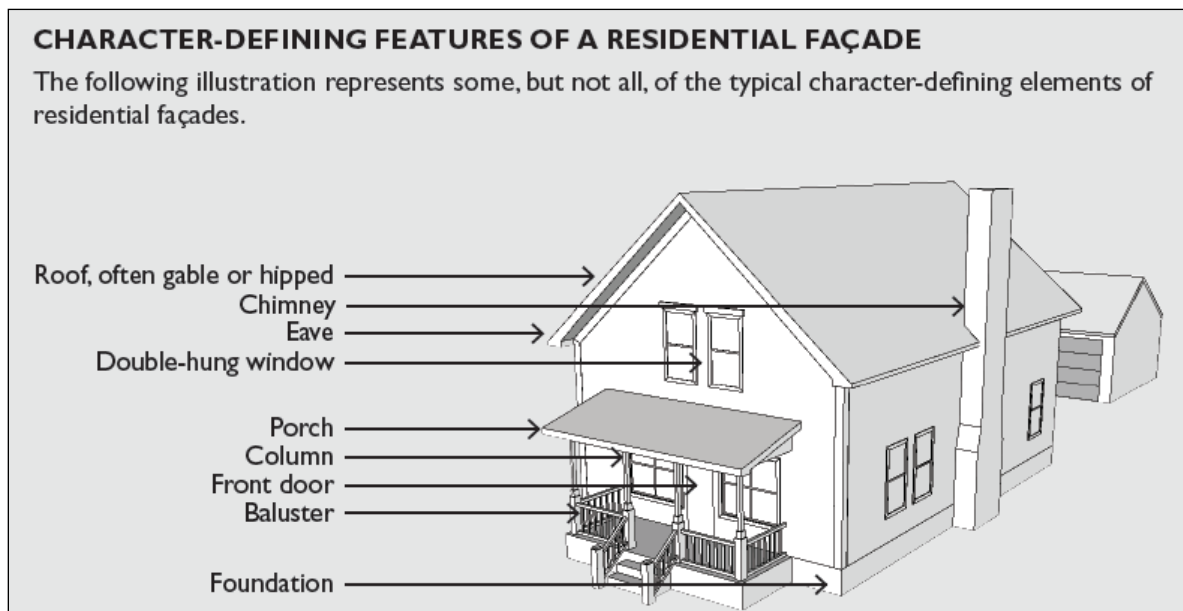
A character defining feature is one that helps to define its distinctive qualities and attributes of a historic resource. As used in the Benicia Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 17.108), “character-defining feature” means the overall shape of the building, its materials, craftsmanship and decorative details, inclusive of those features identified on a Historic Resources Inventory. In addition to defining the special significance of a building, the repetition of these features within a historic district creates a visual unity at the street level that contributes to the overall cohesiveness of the district.

Character-Defining Features of a Residential Building

Specific common character-defining features of a residential building include:

- Building and roof orientation: Orientation of building and roof in respect to the street
- Roof form: Gable, hipped or flat roof
- Chimney: Structural component projecting vertically beyond roof
- Exposed rafters: Structural component at eaves
- Attic window or vent: An opening at a gable end
- Eaves: Portion of the roof that overhangs the vertical walls
- Porch: A one-story covered, unenclosed or partially enclosed entry element
- Front door: The primary entrance into the building
- Window: An opening in the walls which may be flush with, or project from, the walls.
- Dormer: A window that projects vertically from the roof or wall
- Architectural details: Trim, moldings, etc. (sometimes with stylistic influence)

In addition, exterior building materials, such as lap or shingle siding, brick or stone foundations, are also character-defining features of residential buildings.

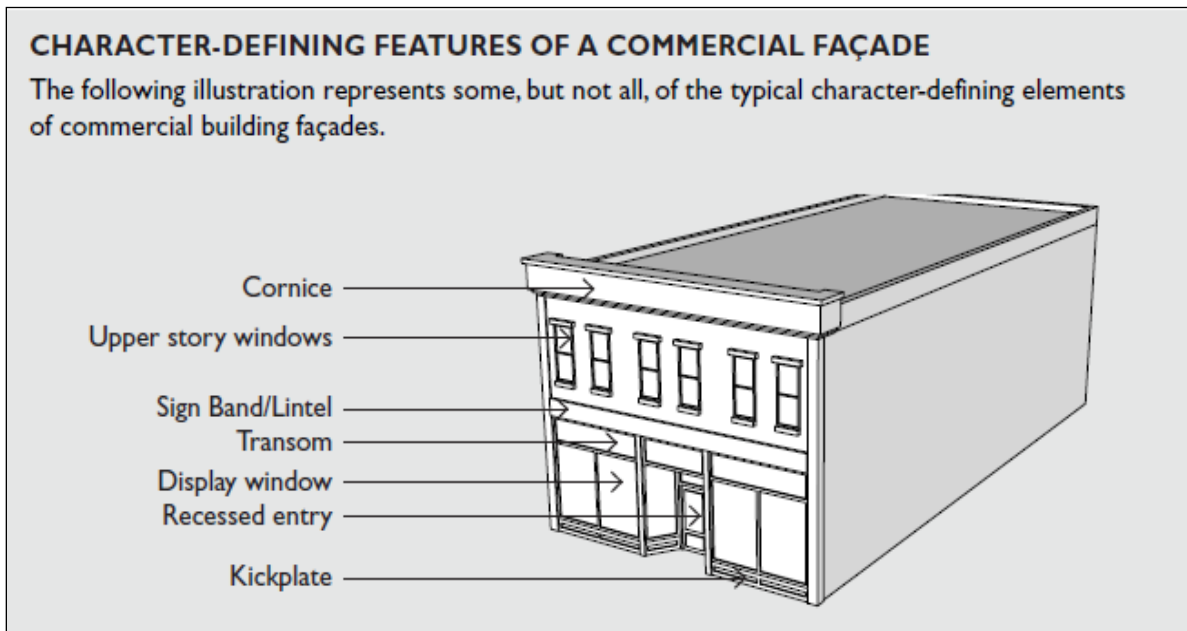


Character-Defining Features of a Commercial Building

Specific character-defining features of a commercial building include:

- Cornice: A decorative band at the top of the building
- Roof shape: Gable or hipped roof.
- Upper-story windows: Windows located above the street level, often having a vertical orientation
- Lintel or mid-belt cornice: A decorative band at the top of the first floor
- Sign band/Lintel: A flat band running above the transoms to allow for the placement of signs
- Storefront: A composition of the following features:
 - Transom: The upper portion of the storefront system, separated by a frame.
 - Display windows: The main portion of glass, often located within the storefront system, where goods and services are displayed. In Benicia, display windows also appear as ganged and individual windows placed within the building façade.
 - Entry: Usually set back from the sidewalk in a protected recess, also sometimes a part of a storefront system; in Benicia, entries for corner buildings may be set at an angle to the corner.
 - Kickplate: Found beneath the display window within the storefront system
- Architectural details: Trim, moldings, etc. (sometimes with stylistic influence)

In addition, exterior building materials, such as lap siding, stucco, brick or stone are also character-defining features of commercial buildings.



CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES OF A COMMERCIAL FAÇADE- GABLE ROOF

The following illustration represents some, but not all, of the typical character-defining elements of commercial building façades.

