



Do-It-Right : **Shophouses and Terraces**

A Guide for Managing Your Conserved Building

April 2026

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1. Introduction

What You Need to Know as the Owner of a Conserved Building

a. Your Responsibilities as the Owner of a Conserved Building

There are over 6,500 conserved shophouses and residential terrace houses in Singapore. Built between the early-1800s and mid-1900s, these heritage buildings continue to be an important part of our cityscape and serve as a link to our nation's past.

As an owner and custodian of a conserved building, you have a legal responsibility to look after an asset with historical, architectural, socio-cultural, and economic value for the nation.

All buildings in gazetted conservation areas in Singapore are subject to special planning controls under the Planning Act 1998. **Building owners must obtain Conservation Permission from URA before carrying out or allowing any renovation work or material change to the use of a building in a conservation area.**

Breaching these requirements can carry serious penalties. Infringements may result in fines up to \$200,000 fine, with an additional \$10,000 for each day the offence continues. Unauthorized demolition may result in fines of up to \$500,000 and/or imprisonment for up to 12 months.

b. Why Should You Manage Your Conserved Building Well?

In the contemporary landscape, many conserved buildings have been adapted to new uses. It is essential that works carried out on these buildings do not compromise their architecture and historic features.

This guide covers common minimal, localised repair* / maintenance works done by owners of conserved buildings. It outlines what owners need to consider and monitor to avoid common pitfalls, submission processes, good practices that owners should adopt, and tips for ongoing maintenance.

3

The owners of well-managed buildings conduct regular inspections, good maintenance, and correct repairs. These buildings enhance the quality of life for occupants and the broader community. They help preserve a sense of place within the neighbourhood, support the building's historic and architectural value. This approach can ultimately improve cost-effectiveness whilst increasing the overall financial value of the conserved building.



Community & Social
Benefit



Historical Fabric &
Architectural Value



Economic Value & Cost
Savings

*"Minimal, localised repair " refers to small-scale interventions to specific areas only, not complete replacement of the conserved element (e.g. replacing some damaged roof tiles is acceptable, but not replacing the entire roof)

c. Carrying Out Works to Your Conserved Building

Adhering to Conservation Guidelines

All proposed repair, maintenance, restoration, or alteration work must strictly follow Conservation Guidelines and Specific Restoration Guidelines.

When planning your work, remember that the conserved elements may extend beyond the façade. **Key architectural features, both in the exterior and interior, are generally required to be retained.**

For full details, refer to [URA Conservation Guidelines](#).

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Submission Procedures

Prior approval is mandatory for any proposed additions & alterations works (e.g repair, maintenance, restoration, additions, or alterations, etc)

Types of Works	Submitted By	Via
Major Structural or Significant Heritage Impact (Category 1 or 2)	Qualified Person (QP) Category 1: Architect Category 2: Architect or Engineer	CORENET For full details, refer to URA Guidelines on Additions & Alterations Works .
Minimal, Localised Repair / Maintenance Works (Category 3)	Owner, Tenant, or Contractor	URA e-Services (Apply for Category 3 Works for Conserved Buildings)



All QR codes of links indexed on Page 59

d. Use of Your Conserved Building

When to seek URA Approval?

URA approval is needed any time a new business activity or a change in function that crosses from one *Use Class* to another occurs. In simple terms, if your proposed activity is different from the building's previous or current use, you should check for approval.

For a complete list and explanation of all official *Use Classes*, please refer to the [URA website](#) (Considerations for Property Use).

The allowable uses for your shophouse can be checked through [URA SPACE](#) online (via layer *Allowable Use for Shophouses and Selected Properties*). A step-by-step guide is available on Page 6.

Submission Procedures

A change of use application can be made by the business owner, landlord, consultant or a Qualified Person (QP) via [GoBusiness Singapore](#).

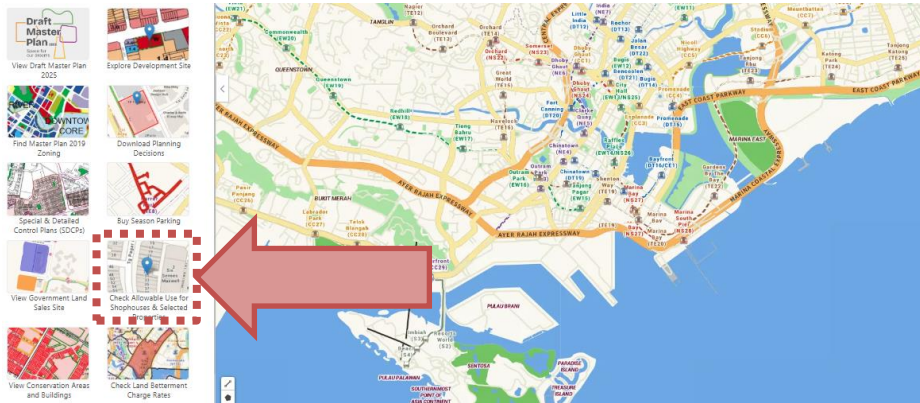
For complete submission requirements (including validity period, fees, and required documents) and process, please visit [GoBusiness Singapore](#).



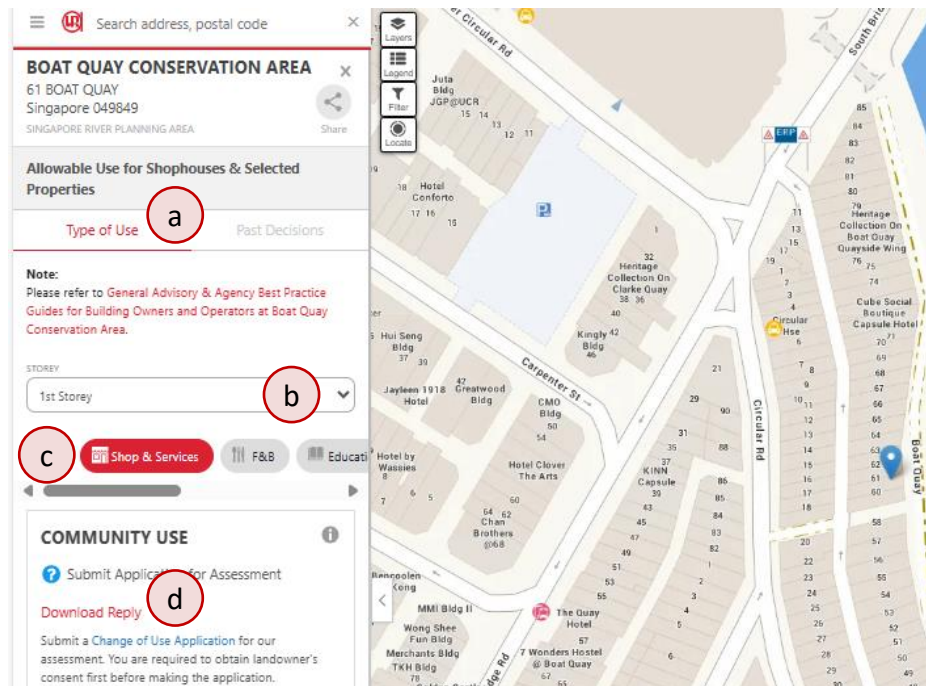
All QR codes of links indexed on Page 59

d. Use of Your Conserved Building

Step-by-Step: Verifying Approved Use on URA SPACE



1. **Go to URA SPACE:**
<https://eservice.ura.gov.sg/maps/>
Best viewed on desktop browser
2. **Turn on the “Allowable Use for Shophouses & Selected Properties” layer**
Click “View Conservation Areas and Buildings”



3. **Search for Property**
Use the search bar on the top left to enter the full address and select the specific building lot
4. **Select the Following:**
 - a. Type of Use
 - b. Correct storey (e.g 1st, 2nd, 3rd ...)
 - c. Category (e.g Shop, F&B ...)
 - d. Download Reply

d. Use of Your Conserved Building

Specific Use Controls in Historic Areas

Use controls are rules put in place to protect the specific and unique character of each conserved area. There are two main rules to be aware of (see right).

For all detailed use controls, complete list of restricted uses in Historic Conservation Areas, and submission requirements, please refer to the [URA website](#) (Use of Buildings in Conservation Areas).

Certain areas have their own community plans that further explain the kinds of uses that are preferred. One such area is Kampong Glam Historic District that has its Place Plan. Owners of buildings in Kampong Glam should also refer to the plan to guide their decisions.

1. General Restricted Uses

Across all Historic Conservation Areas, certain types of businesses or activities are generally disallowed because they might negatively affect the environment. These uses include but are not limited to:

- New bars, pubs, nightclubs and karaoke lounges
- Pollutive trades or industries

2. Core Areas

Certain streets within Chinatown, Kampong Glam, and Little India are designated as Core Areas. These are the key locations where traditional activities happen.

To keep that historic character alive, the use of buildings in these areas, especially the ground floor, are more closely managed and controlled.

Kampong Glam Historic Area 2023 – 2028 Place Plan

The full version of the Place Plan is available at:
www.listeningtokg.org



All QR codes of links indexed on Page 59

e. Managing Tenancy Works and Use

For tenanted buildings, the owner is fully accountable for any works carried out on the conserved property, as well as for the use of the conserved building.

Before signing a tenancy, please check if the tenant's intended use for the property can be allowed.

You should also remind the tenant to obtain the necessary approval from URA and other agencies before commencing works or change in use.

For more details, refer to Sections 1c and 1d (Pages 4 – 7).

f. Submissions: When & Who?

This table outlines common works where you need to submit an application and who is responsible for the submission.

When to Submit?		Common Example Works	Submission Required?	Who Submits?	Where to Submit?
Change of Use		• Shop to Restaurant • Office to Shop	Yes	Owner or Tenant	GoBusiness Singapore
Additions & Alterations (A&A) Works	Major Structural or Significant Heritage Impact (Category 1 or 2)	• <u>1st</u> Restoration of windows and / or doors • <u>Total</u> Replacement of roof tiles	Yes	Qualified Person (QP) Category 1: Architect Category 2: Architect or Engineer	CORENET
	Minimal, Localised Repair* / Maintenance Works (Category 3)	• Painting works • Painting of Mural • Localised repair of ornaments • Installation of A/C units	Yes	Owner, Tenant, or Contractor	URA e-Services (Apply for Category 3 Works for Conserved Buildings)
Signage		• New or addition of signages	Yes	Owner, Tenant, or Contractor	BCA e-Services (Advertisement Licensing System) OR URA e-Services (Apply for Category 3 Works for Conserved Buildings)



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g. Periodic Structural and Facade Investigations

About the Periodic Structural and Facade Investigation

Owners of conserved buildings are also required to comply with the Building Control Act regarding the safety and maintenance of your property. This includes the following inspections:

- Periodic Façade Inspection (PFI) is designed to detect and address facade deterioration.
- Periodic Structural Inspection (PSI) ensures that buildings remain safe for continued occupation.

For full details on the criteria and process, please refer to the BCA website.



Critical Reminder

Remedial works resulting from both PFI and PSI may affect both the structural and architectural features of a conserved building. If so, URA approval must be obtained before any works can begin.

1. **Assess Works Category:** The owner or their appointed QP (Professional Engineer) must consult the URA Conservation and A&A Guidelines to classify the proposed repair works (e.g., Category 1, 2, or 3).
2. **Obtain URA Permission:** Depending on the category, a formal URA submission via CORENET (Cat 1 & 2) by a QP or submission via URA e-Services (Cat 3) by owner or contractor is required.
3. **Consult If Unsure:** If there is any uncertainty regarding the proposed works or submission requirements, the owner or QP should write in to the URA Conservation Department at ura_cu@ura.gov.sg.



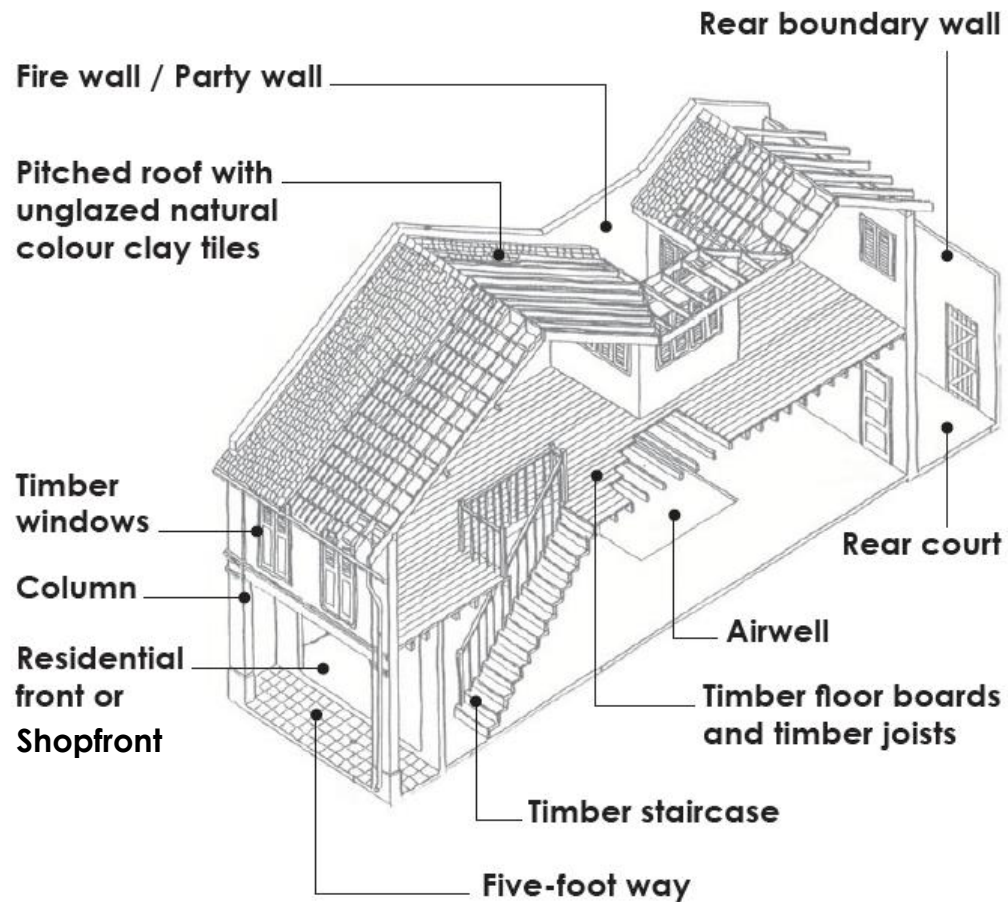
2. The Shophouse – Key Elements and Guidelines

Understanding its Key Elements and Guidelines

a. Shophouse Typology

Early Shophouse Style	First Transitional Shophouse Style	Late Shophouse Style	Second Transitional Shophouse Style	Art Deco Shophouse Style	Modern Shophouse Style
Shophouses of this style are low, squat and feature two-storeys with one or two windows on the upper floor façade. The rectangular doors and windows are timber framed with shutters of boards, panels or louveres. There may be rectangular or circular vents between or above the windows or doors. Ornamentation is minimal, but where used, it is usually derived from ethnic sources, reflective of the immigrants who built them.	A general lightening of expression can be discerned in this style due to the greater height of each storey. Windows and doors are usually timber-shuttered although small plates of glass in the shutters become increasingly common. There are often two windows on the upper storeys and the transoms are flat-arched, semi-circular or rectangular infilled with timber framed glass, cast iron or carved timber panels.	This is the most spectacular style, particularly in the use of ornamentation. The tripartite arrangement of windows on the façade reduces the wall space to a minimum and provides maximum ventilation. In later examples, the “wall” surfaces is replaced by columns or pilasters framing the windows. The reduced wall space led to more ingenious façade designs that borrowed freely from the various traditions. Brightly-coloured ceramic tiles and plaster bouquets, festoons, plaques, and other elaborate ornamentation are evidence of the builder’s artistry.	This style has a simple and streamlined design as the designers and builders began to simplify the ornamentation. This simplification may have been a reaction to the exuberant spirit of the Late style or could have been due to purely economical reasons. Late style motifs such as ornately carved transoms and colourful ceramic tiles are often combined with Art Deco elements such as cross-braced glass window panels and simple geometric balustrade designs.	Buildings of this style are typified by the streamlining of classical motifs, such as column orders, arches, keystones and pediments, into geometric design. Decorative wall tiles are rarely used. Greater attention is placed on the proportional beauty and elevational composition of the whole row of shophouses, with special emphasis on street corners. A common feature of this style is a strategically placed plaque bearing the date of the building’s construction.	This style features the innovative use of very thin concrete fins and air vents on the building façade that are both functional as well as decorative. The windows are well proportioned to complement the geometric design of the façade. This style is in line with the International Movement towards functionalism, less ornamentation and the use of modern materials. The style reflects the post-war economic situation and the needs of the middle-class for modern facilities.
					
9 Erskine Road	52 Smith Street	1 Lorong Bachok	21 Kreta Ayer Road	36 Keong Saik Road	29 Ann Siang Road
1840	1900	1910	1930	1940	1950
1840 – 1900	Early 1900s	1900 - 1940	Late 1930s	1930 - 1960	1950 - 1960

b. The Shophouse – Key Elements



The **Pitched Roof** is normally finished with unglazed natural colour V-profile or flat, interlocking “Marseille” clay tiles.

The **Timber Windows** on the upper storeys are either French windows with internal balustrades or casement windows with timber shutters. Some shophouses also have **Balconies or Verandahs** on the upper storeys.

The **Airwell** opens directly to the sky to provide natural ventilation and lighting to the interior.

The **Rear Court** is where service areas such as the outhouse are traditionally located.

There is either a **Residential Front** or **Shopfront** at the first storey, depending on the original building use.

The **Five-Foot Way** serves as a sheltered space for circulation.

c. Pitched Roof

Key Guidelines for Pitched Roof

The original profile, pitch, height, party wall and eaves projection are to be retained and restored.

The original ornamental roof ridge profile and design are to be retained and restored.

Shophouse roofs must use traditional clay tiles that are unglazed and in their natural colour. There are two types of clay tiles available: V-profile tiles or flat interlocking tiles (i.e "Marseilles" tiles). To find out which specific type is required for a particular shophouse, check the Specific Restoration Guidelines, as this will vary depending on the individual building.



Ornamental (top) and typical (bottom) roof ridge



V-profile tiles



"Marseilles" tiles



Pantiles – **Not Allowed**



C-profile tiles – **Not Allowed**

c. Pitched Roof

One-for-one Localised Replacement of Roof Tiles

Roof tiles naturally accumulate dirt and may develop cracks over the years.

Cleaning is encouraged to keep the roof in good condition. However, avoid using high-pressure water jets which can cause minor cracks and subsequent water leakage. Instead, ensure that the tiles are washed at a low pressure and sprayed from a safe distance.

Only the specific cracked tiles should be replaced, not the entire roof.

The original roof profile, pitch, height, party wall, and eaves projection must be carefully retained throughout the works.

Do note that one-for-one replacement and/or repair generally applies only to previously restored shophouses (i.e obtained Certificate of Statutory Completion (CSC) Clearance).



Before (top) and after (bottom) cleaning and localised one-for-one replacement of cracked tiles

Common Works to Pitched Roof

The table below shows common works to the pitched roof by category. For detailed information about these categories and the submission procedures, refer to Page 9.

Category 1	- Restoration of roof profile, pitch or height - Addition, removal or change in size or location of jackroof
Category 2	Replacement of roof tiles
Category 3	One-for-one localised replacement of roof tiles.

Note: List of works in this table is non-exhaustive

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Submission Procedures

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d. Main Facade

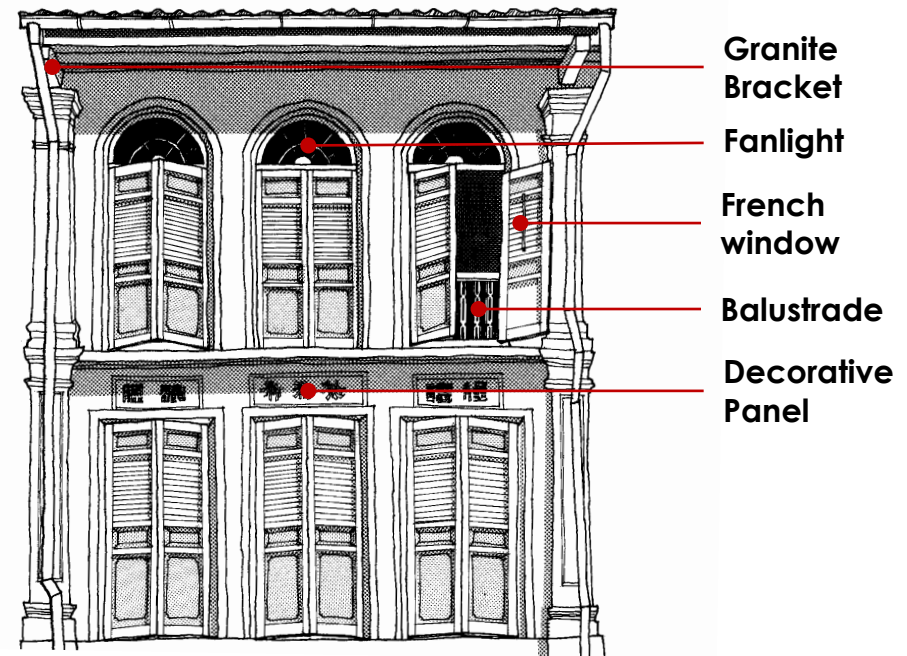
Key Guidelines for Doors, Windows, Fanlights, Transoms, and Vents

The original doors, windows, fanlights, transoms, and vents are to be retained and restored.

New internal additions (e.g. staircases, walls, partitions and false ceilings etc.) cannot abut any original door openings, windows, fanlights, transoms, and vents.

Any new internal additions near key original architectural features must be set back from or placed above these features to ensure they remain visually accessible and unobstructed when viewed from inside the building.

Any existing coloured glass in doors, windows, fanlights, transoms, and vents cannot be replaced with clear glass.



d. Main Facade

One-for-one Localised Replacement of Doors or Windows

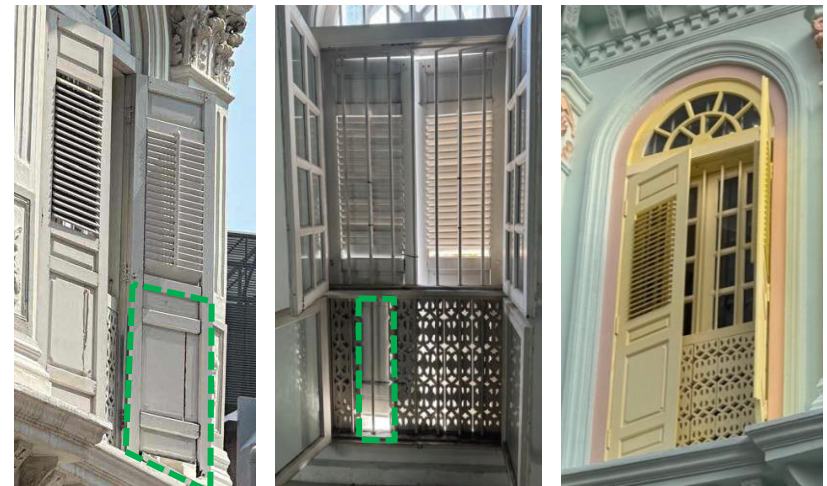
Doors and windows naturally experience wear and tear over years of use. Repair of the original door or window is always preferred over total replacement.

When one-for-one replacement is required, the replacement must match the original material exactly, follow traditional construction methods, and strictly maintain the original proportions and profile to protect the building's historical integrity.

Ensure the following are documented for URA's evaluation:

- Photos of the current state of door/window
- Photos of existing reference features (if there is an intact window or door on-site)
- Detailed drawings with annotated dimensions and materials

One-for-one replacement and/or repair generally applies only to previously restored shophouses (i.e. obtained Certificate of Statutory Completion (CSC) Clearance).



Before and after one-for-one replacement of damaged timber French window and missing timber balustrade

Addition of Secondary Doors or Windows

To meet modern comfort standards, a secondary layer of doors and windows can be installed, subject to the design being compatible with those of the main doors and windows. For conserved buildings with timber windows / doors, timber frames are encouraged as they are more compatible.

Secondary doors at 1st storey must not damage / interfere with operability of existing historic features and must not obstruct five-foot way.

Secondary windows on upper floors must be openable to allow for cleaning and maintenance of the original outer windows

To prevent cool air from escaping while maintaining visual appreciation of conserved features, vents should be sealed with glass on the interior side only.



The secondary door does not damage or interfere with the operability of existing historic doors, nor does it obstruct the open walkway

d. Main Facade

Key Guidelines for Balconies and Verandahs

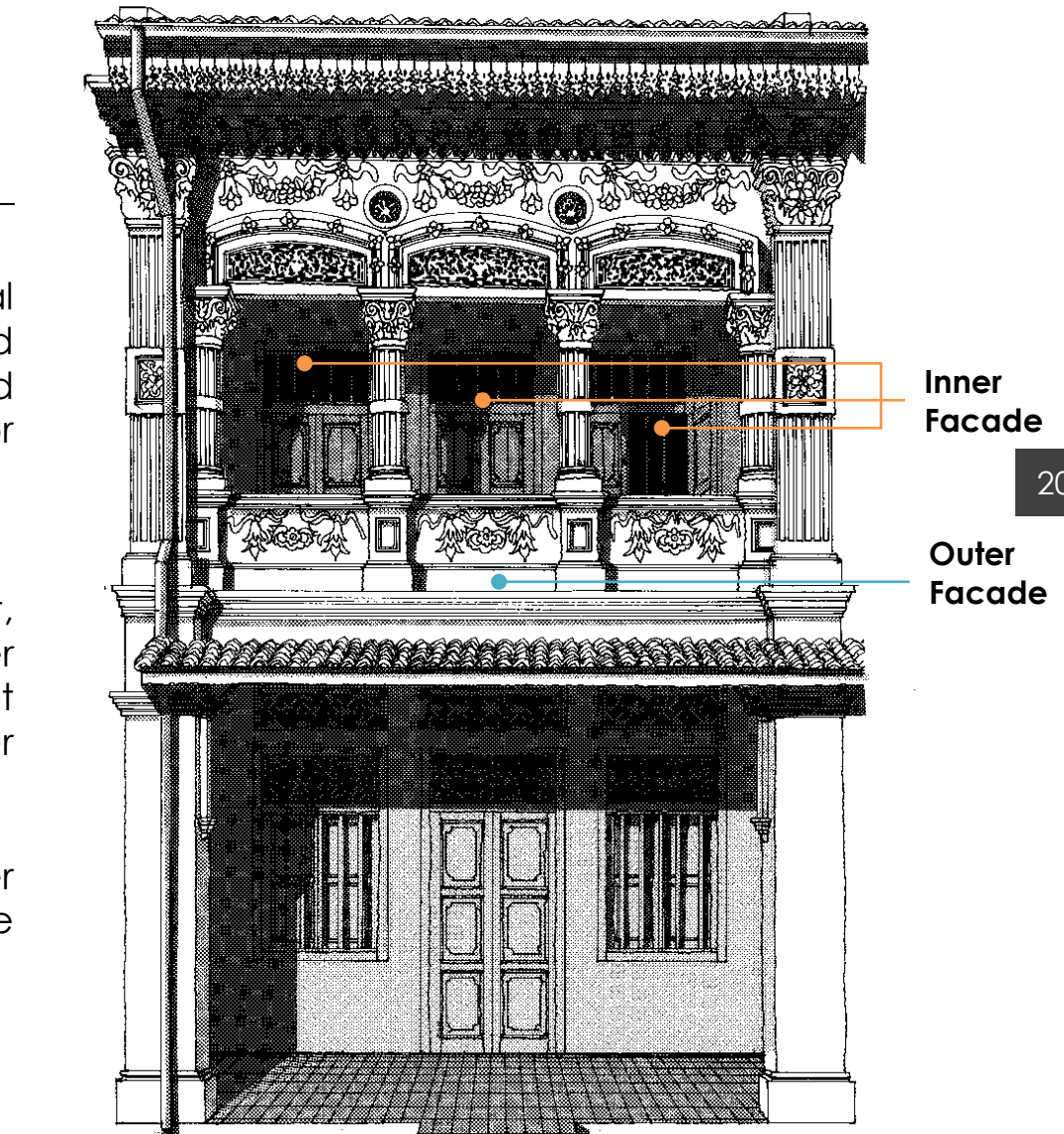
Open Balcony

An open balcony is an attractive tropical feature designed to provide shade and ventilation. The balcony shall remain open and not be enclosed with glass panels, windows, or solid walls.

Inner Facade

While the outer facade fronts the street, shophouses with balconies feature an inner facade. The inner facade is a recessed wall that contains doors, windows and other ornamentation facing the balcony.

The original doors, windows and other ornamentation of the inner facade are to be kept.



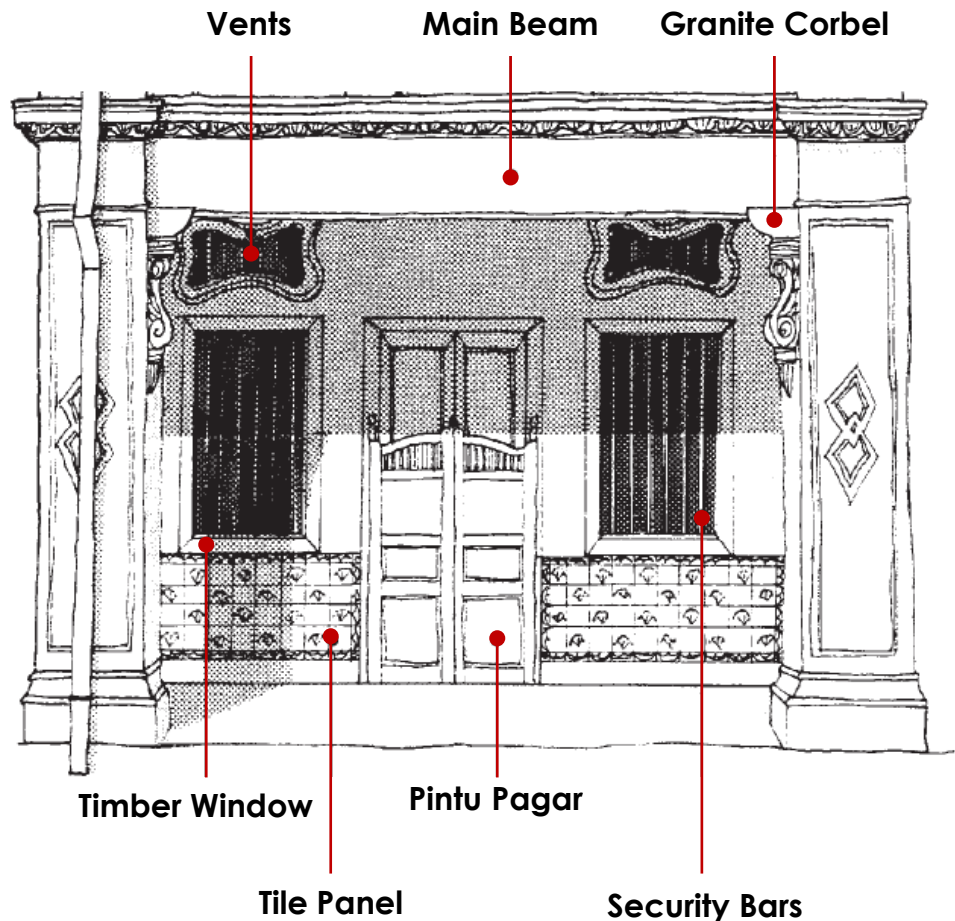
Key Guidelines for Residential Front and Shopfront

A typical shophouse has either a **Residential Front** or **Shopfront** at the 1st storey, depending on the original building use.

A **Residential Front**, as shown, typically has a central door with windows on both sides. It is a special historic feature.

All buildings with Residential Front which is existing and/or identified in the Specific Restoration Guidelines (SRG), regardless of land use zoning, shall be retained and restored.

Demolition of an existing residential front is not allowed.

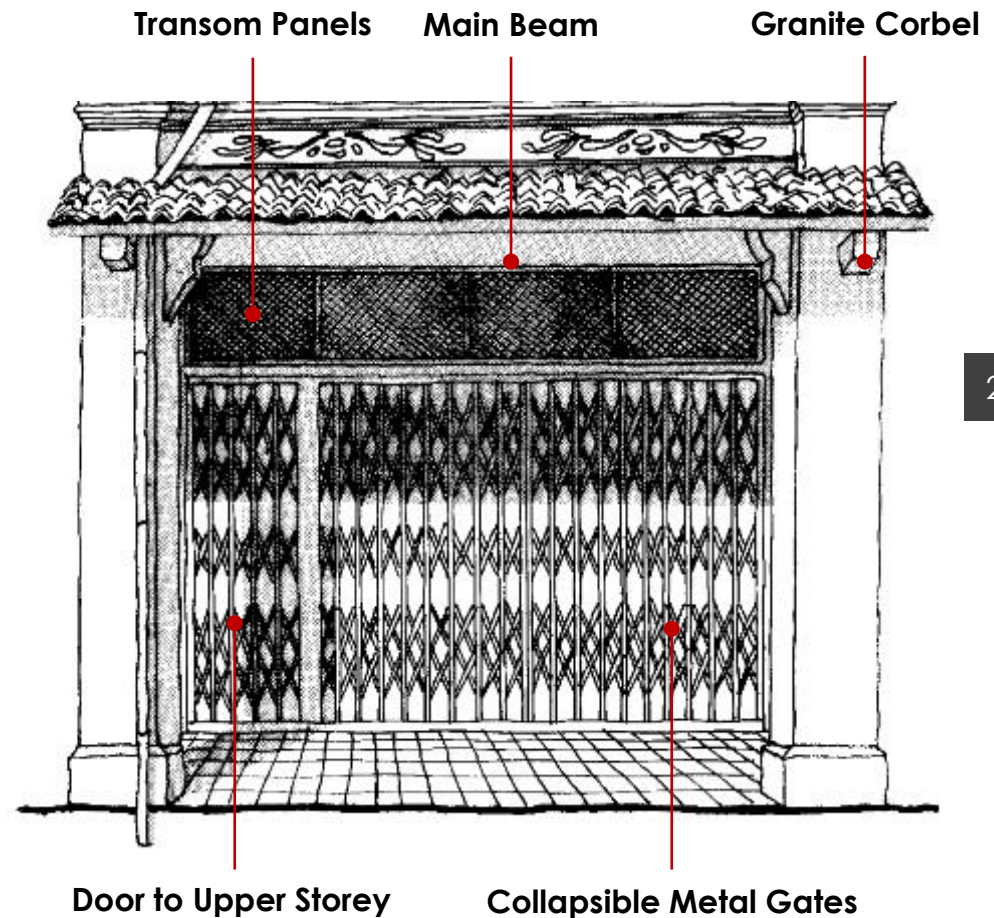


Residential Front

d. Main Facade

A **Shopfront**, as shown, may still retain traditional shopfront design elements e.g timber shutter boards, collapsible / folding timber or metal gates, and display cases.

Proposed new shopfronts must not be “blank walls” (e.g solid walls with no openings or vinyl stickers covering the entire glass), as they create a passive, uninviting atmosphere for pedestrians.



Shopfront

d. Main Facade

For shophouses with a standard shopfront, there is more flexibility for changes, with a few exceptions:

- Some specific street blocks have strict guidelines where the original design must be retained
- Original historic features (e.g transom panels, vents, decorative mouldings, or murals) must be retained



Original transom panels retained while shop front has changed



Modern shopfront design retaining the original collapsible metal gate as both functional and decorative element



Modern shopfront design which is not a blank wall

d. Main Facade

Common Works to Main Facade

The table below shows common works to the main facade by category. For detailed information about these categories and the submission procedures, refer to Page 9.

Category 1	Restoration of doors, windows, fanlights, transoms, and vents on all exterior elevations: front (main), inner, side, and rear façades, gable end wall, and rear service block.
Category 2	Restoration of doors, windows, fanlights, transoms, and vents at the rear court
Category 3	- One-for-one replacement or repair - Addition, replacement, or removal of secondary door or window - Commercial buildings with residential front control: - Replacement of 1st storey window with door and vice versa - Change in infill panel(s) of 1st storey door or window from timber to glass and vice versa - Buildings without residential front control: - Change in shopfront design

Note: List of works in this table is non-exhaustive

Submission Procedures

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Types of Works	Submitted By	Via
Major Structural or Significant Heritage Impact (Category 1 or 2)	Qualified Person (QP) Category 1: Architect Category 2: Architect or Engineer	CORENET For full details, refer to URA Guidelines on Additions & Alterations Works .
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Key Guidelines for Airwells

The original size, location, windows and decorative features (if any) are to be retained and restored.

New windows can be added, but they must match the design and materials of the original upper storey windows on the front facade.

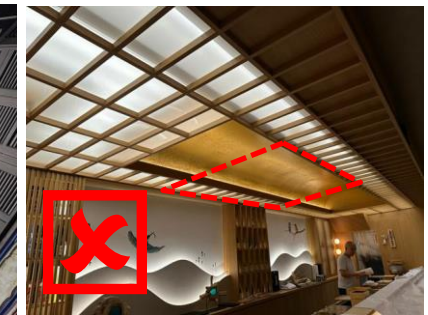
A new lightweight, transparent or translucent cover lower than the eaves of the main roof can be added over the air well. It can be retractable or fixed.

All new elements such as staircase landing, wall and partition cannot abut the window openings and vents of the airwell.

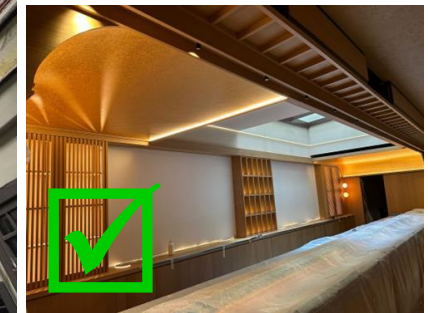
No other above ground structure (e.g false ceilings), lift or floor can be added within the airwell to retain the spatial and light quality of the airwell.



Original size, location, windows, and decorative features are to be retained and restored



False ceiling installed below the transparent cover at the airwell (top) – **Not Allowed**



Spatial and light quality of the airwell must be kept (bottom)

Common Works to Airwells

The table below shows common works to airwells by category. For detailed information about these categories and the submission procedures, refer to Page 9.

Category 1	Restoration of architectural elements of the airwell (e.g windows and decorative features)
Category 2	- Addition or removal or window, including transom above a window - Addition of cover over airwell
Category 3	One-for-one replacement or repair of window at airwell.

Note: List of works in this table is non-exhaustive

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Submission Procedures

Prior approval is mandatory for any proposed additions & alterations works (e.g repair, maintenance, restoration, additions, or alterations, etc)

Types of Works	Submitted By	Via
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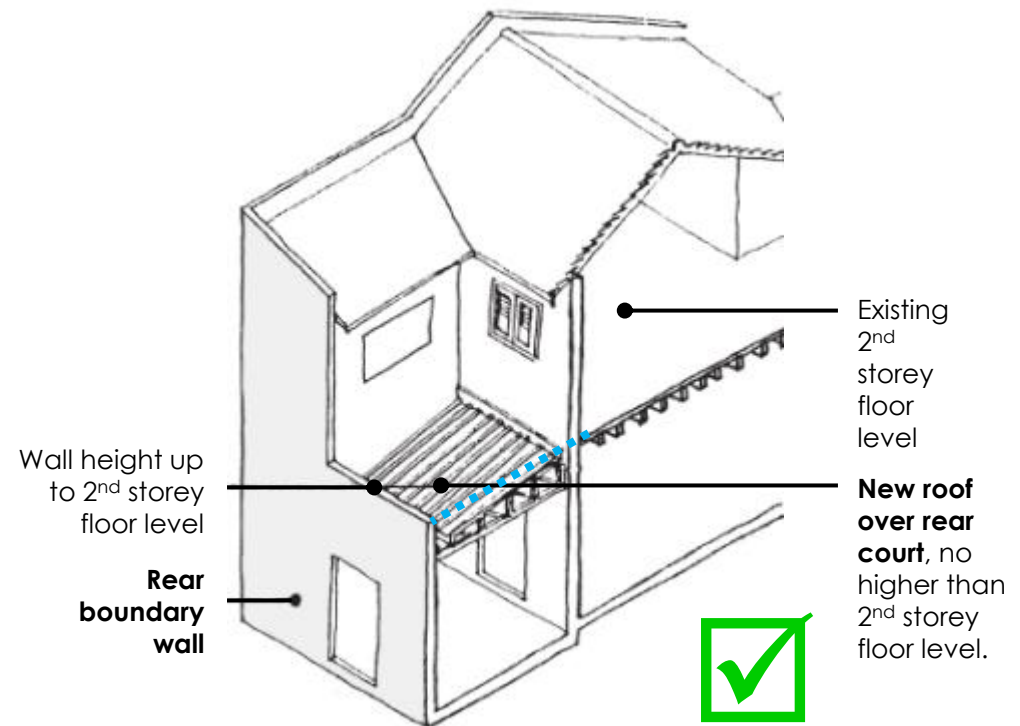
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Key Guidelines for Rear Court

A new roof can be added over the rear court, **provided it does not exceed the 2nd storey floor level.**

It can be constructed with reinforced concrete, lightweight materials, or the same material as the main roof. Any metal components must be anodised or colour-coated.

No additional extensions above or on the new roof over rear court.



Common Works to Rear Court

The table below shows common works to the rear court by category. For detailed information about these categories and the submission procedures, refer to Page 9.

Category 2	- Restoration of architectural elements of the rear court (e.g windows and decorative features) - Addition or removal of roof over rear court
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Note: List of works in this table is non-exhaustive

Submission Procedures

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Types of Works	Submitted By	Via
Major Structural or Significant Heritage Impact (Category 1 or 2)	Qualified Person (QP) Category 1: Architect Category 2: Architect or Engineer	CORENET For full details, refer to URA Guidelines on Additions & Alterations Works .

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Key Guidelines for Five-Foot Way

The five-foot way is a sheltered space for circulation. It is an important element that contributes to the experience of walking through a conservation area.

Pedestrian safety should be taken into account when installing fixtures such as letterboxes.

Preferably, such fixtures should be integrated into the design of the building. Sharp corners and projecting surfaces should be avoided.

The five-foot way should be kept clear for pedestrian flow at all times



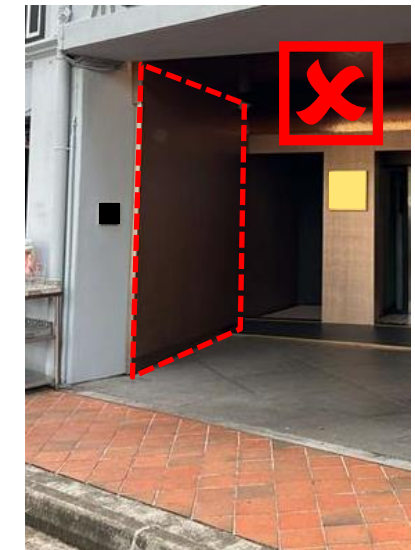
Integrated letter box



Protruding letter box



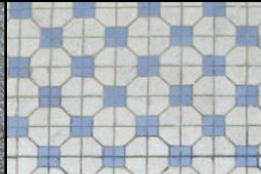
Clear five-foot way



Obstructions along five-foot way – **Not Allowed**

g. Five-Foot Way

Where the existing floor finishes are not original, owners are strongly encouraged to reintroduce traditional floor finishes. The selection should preferably be period-appropriate finishes that reflect the shophouse's architectural style as seen in the table below.

Traditional Five-Foot Way Finishes						
	Plain Cement Screed with Rope Indentations	Terracotta Tiled Flooring with Granite Edge Slabs	Cement Tiled Flooring with Border	Encaustic Clay Tiled Flooring with Border and Granite Edge Slabs	Terrazzo Flooring with Border	Mosaic Tiled Flooring
Early						
First Transitional						
Late						
Second Transitional						
Art Deco						
Modern						

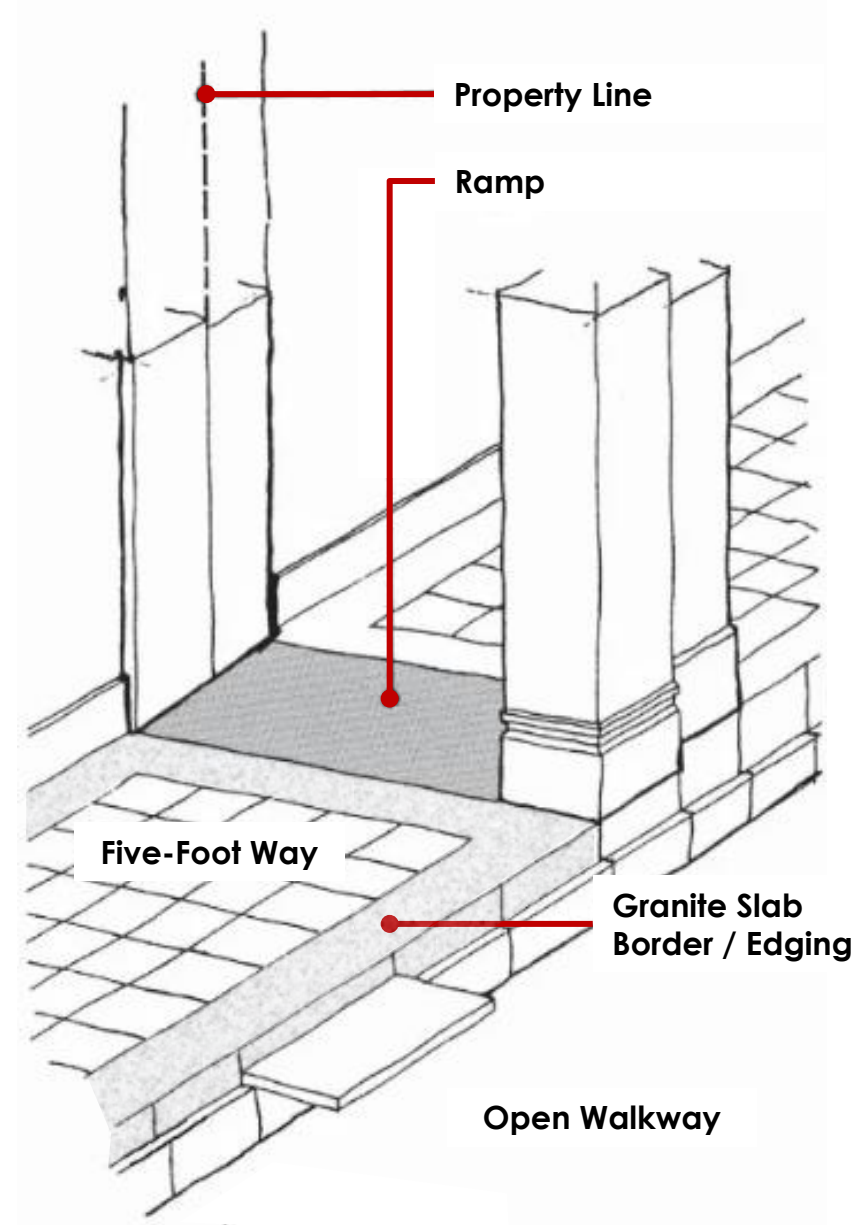
g. Five-Foot Way

The five-foot way should be at the same level as neighbouring units and the open walkway where possible. If there is a height difference of up to 175mm, a ramp should be provided. The ramp's slope cannot be steeper than 1:10.

As shophouses are typically under different ownership and restored at different times, an owner has the following options:

- Liaise with neighbours to level the ramp.
- Provide gradual ramps.
- Keep the existing step if the adjacent units are not restored.

Some five-foot ways have original granite slab borders and/or edging. If such original granite slabs are present, they shall be retained and restored.



Common Works to Five-Foot Way

The table below shows common works to the five-foot way by category. For detailed information about these categories and the submission procedures, refer to Page 9.

Category 3	• Change of flooring material at five-foot way • Addition or removal of ramps or steps • Change in level of five-foot way
------------	---

Note: List of works in this table is non-exhaustive

Submission Procedures

A submission to URA is to be made online via: [URA e-Services](#) (Apply for Category 3 Works for Conserved Buildings)

 All QR codes of links indexed on Page 59

h. Special Finishes

Some buildings have special wall finishes which give them a distinctive look. **These finishes should be retained and not be painted over.**



Ceramic Tiles

Panels of decorative embossed ceramic tiles add interest to the facade.



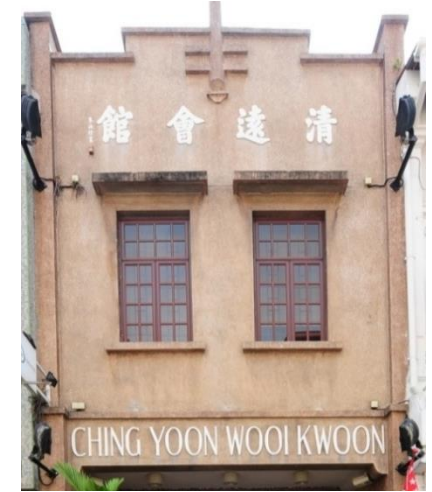
'Fair-faced' Brickwork

Decorative brick finish reveals the natural colour and texture of brick.



Mosaic Tiles

Small ceramic or glass tiles gives the facade depth of colour.



Shanghai Plaster

A mixture of cement, sand and crushed marble gives the appearance of solid stonework.



i. Decorative Features

Some buildings have special decorative ornaments which are culturally significant. **These unique features should be retained and not painted over.**



"Jian Nian" ornament formed with broken ceramic pieces



Decorative scroll



Original granite column base



Original granite corbel



3. Common Works – Quick Guide

Guidelines and Submissions Procedures for Common Works

a. Signage

What should I do if I want to put up a new sign on my conserved building?

1. Refer to Pages 39 and 40 for allowable locations for a new sign.
2. Submit an application to the Advertisement Licensing Department of BCA, who will consult URA internally for clearance.
3. Alternatively, you can submit and obtain URA's clearance through our e-Services before you submit an application to the Advertisement Licensing Department of BCA.
4. Put up the signage only after approval has been issued.

What happens if there is no approval for my sign?

You will be required to remove signs if they cover key architectural or decorative features.

Submission Procedures

BCA

A submission for a licence is to be made online via: [BCA e-Services](#) (Advertisement Licensing System)

URA

A submission to URA is to be made online via: [URA e-Services](#) (Apply for Category 3 Works for Conserved Buildings)

More details on signage requirements are available online at [URA Signage Guidelines](#)

 All QR codes of links indexed on Page 59

Traditional Building Signs

Traditional signs are an important part of the historical, architectural and visual environment in conservation areas.

Some take the form of carved timber panel with gold-painted Chinese characters and sometimes with English translations. Others have letterings and characters formed with moulded plaster on the outer face of columns, beams, friezes and pediments. They indicate the year of construction, company name or original building use.

Even if they are no longer relevant to the current business, they help to record the history of a building and street. They should not be removed from the building façade but can be painted the same colour as the background wall.



a. Signage

Traditional Building Signs



Allowable Locations for Signs

New building signs can be placed on a shophouse at locations which do not block the original building features.

The size and design of the sign should complement the shophouse facade and not overwhelm it.

For visual diagrams showing allowable sign placement and sizing requirements for conserved shophouses, refer to the [Signage Do-It-Right Guide](#).

For more information, please refer to the [URA Signage Guidelines](#).

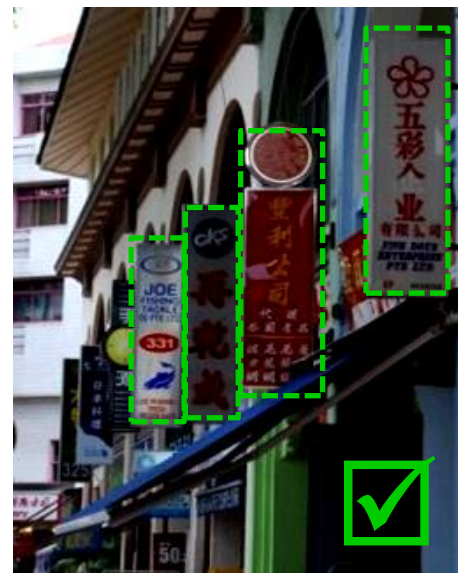
 All QR codes of links indexed on Page 59



On forecourt wall



Above the front door



Projected from 2nd storey pilasters



Within five-foot way

a. Signage

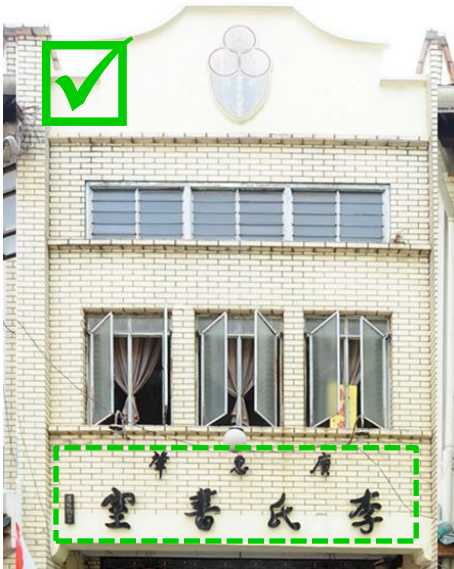
Allowable Locations for Signs (cont.)



On main beam



On gable end wall



Cut-out letters on the facade of Art Deco & Modern style buildings



On rear boundary wall

Non-Allowable Locations and Types of Signs

Signs which overwhelm and obscure the architecture of the building are not allowed.

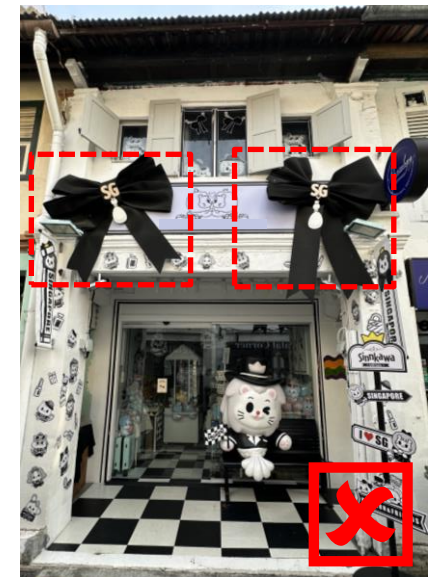
For visual diagrams showing allowable sign placement and sizing requirements for conserved shophouses, refer to the [Signage Do-It-Right Guide](#).



Running LED signs –
Not Allowed



Panel signs spanning
units – **Not Allowed**



3D signs / props –
Not Allowed

b. Air-Conditioning Unit

What should I do if I want to install an air-conditioning unit on my conserved building?

1. Refer to page 42 for the allowable locations for air-conditioning units.
2. Submit and obtain clearance from URA.
3. Install the air-conditioning unit after approval has been obtained.

What happens if there is no approval for my air-conditioning unit?

You will be required to remove air-conditioning units which cover key architectural or decorative features.

Submission Procedures

A submission to URA is to be made online via: [URA e-Services](#) (Apply for Category 3 Works for Conserved Buildings)

 All QR codes of links indexed on Page 59

b. Air-Conditioning Unit

Allowable Locations for Air-Conditioning (A/C) Units

A/C units should be integrated within the building envelope at the rear of the shophouse and be properly screened.

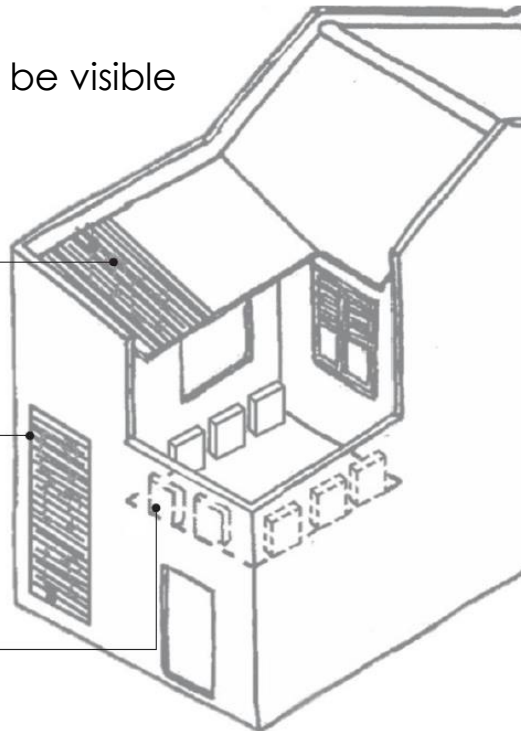
A/C units can also be neatly placed at the rear and lined along the parapet, party walls or rear service block walls.

A/C units are not to be visible from street level.

A/C under roof of rear service block
Opening is covered with screening

A/C behind rear boundary wall
Opening is covered with screening

A/C behind parapet wall at rear
A/C units are not to be visible from street level. Otherwise, screening is to be provided.



A/C units hidden behind rear boundary wall with proper screening



A/C units are screened and neatly placed on the roof over rear court



A/C units neatly placed on the roof over rear court and not seen from street level

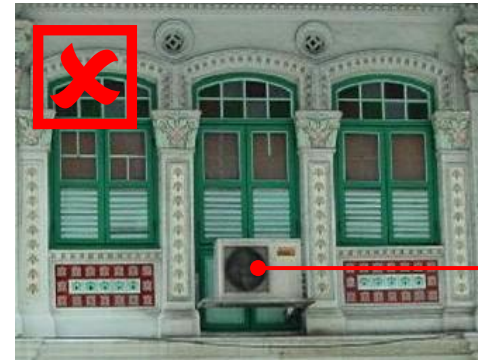
b. Air-Conditioning Unit

A/C units not allowed to be placed on any facades (i.e front, side, rear, or inner facade) and windows. A/C units also cannot be placed beyond the rear boundary wall.

For shophouses with a flat roof typology, the locations in Page 42 still apply. A/C units are not allowed on the conserved flat roof of the main building.

If the shophouse has a new rear extension, the A/C units shall be placed within the new rear extension.*

*For developments within the Central Area, all condensing units located on the new extensions are to comply with the prevailing screening requirements.



A/C units cannot be installed on front façade window



A/C unit should not be placed on any part of the external facade



A/C units should not encroach beyond rear boundary wall

c. Building Colour and Paint

Allowable Colours and Paint Scheme

Traditional colour schemes are to be used to recall the historic streetscape. Generally, the base colour of shophouses has a pastel hue with stronger or lighter colours used to highlight selected features.

One of the most common colours in the early days was indigo blue. In later years, the availability of more pigments led to pastel shades of yellows, greens, pinks, blues and beige.

In repainting historic shophouses, a good paint scheme will enhance the features of the building through colours appropriate to its architecture and period.



Examples of appropriate paint schemes

Submission Procedures

A submission to URA is to be made online via: [URA e-Services](#) (Apply for Category 3 Works for Conserved Buildings)

 All QR codes of links indexed on Page 59

c. Building Colour and Paint

Treatment of Special Features and Ornamentations

For buildings with special finishes or ornaments (see Pages 33 and 34 for examples), these features must not be painted over. If these special features have been painted over, you will be required to remove the paintwork.

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Examples of appropriate paint schemes for shophouses with special features and ornaments



Examples of appropriate paint schemes

c. Building Colour and Paint

Best Practices for Paint Types and Application

Shophouses were originally painted with lime wash. This permeable, 'breathable' finish gave the wall surface a soft, pastel appearance.

When repainting historic buildings, lime wash or its modern equivalents (such as mineral paint) should be used to retain this breathable quality as this protects the underlying brick structure.

Timber surfaces were typically painted in stronger shades than the background wall. They could also be lacquered. For example, a pastel green shophouse would have dark green window frames, while a beige shophouse would have brown window frames.

Plaster ornamentation would also be highlighted in darker or lighter shades. For example, a blue painted facade may have white painted reliefs.

Non-Allowable Building Colours and Paint Scheme

Painting over the entire facade, including the windows and decorative mouldings, in shades of black is not allowed as this hides the architectural details.

The use of bright neon and metallic colours (e.g. gold and silver, unless to highlight particular features in a traditional manner) is also not allowed as it is not compatible with the historical character of the shophouse.



Examples of neon and black paint schemes –
Not Allowed

Special Colour Schemes for Streets or Precincts

Special colour schemes based on good practice may be adopted for conserved buildings in a street or precinct if all owners agree. Such proposals can be emailed to the URA Conservation Department at ura_cu@ura.gov.sg for consideration.

A special colour scheme applies to the Emerald Hill Conservation Area. Please refer to Page 48 for details of the scheme.

Buildings & Areas with Colour Control

Some buildings are characterised by their special colour scheme:

- Gedung Kuning, 73 Sultan Gate
- Red House, 75 East Coast Road
- 'Black & White' Bungalows

The same colour shall be used in repainting these buildings.



Red House, 75 East Coast Road

c. Building Colour and Paint

Special Colour Scheme for Emerald Hill

To complement and enhance the heritage and character of Emerald Hill, a special paint scheme has been developed together with homeowners and the Emerald Hill Conservation Association (EHCA).

Base colours are to be in pastel hues, with stronger or lighter colours to pick out selected features or decorative ornamentations. An approved range of pastel colours can be viewed at the Conservation Department in the URA Centre.



Submission Procedures

A submission to URA is to be made online via: [URA e-Services](#) (Apply for Category 3 Works for Conserved Buildings)

A physical sample paint card must be sent to the URA for evaluation. The submission must be endorsed by the building owner.

Find out more about the special paint scheme guidelines and process for conserved buildings in Emerald Hill Conservation Area at:

<https://go.gov.sg/emeraldhillpaintscheme>

 All QR codes of links indexed on Page 59

What should I do if I want to paint a mural on my conserved building?

1. Refer to Page 50 for the allowable locations for murals.
2. Mural content must be appropriate to the character of the building and conservation area. It must not contain profanity or negative racial / religious content, or contravene policies of other government agencies. Refer to Page 53 for more details.
3. Proposed mural submission must be endorsed by the building owner.
4. Submit and obtain clearance from URA before starting work.

Will URA consult anyone else on my proposal?

Yes, as part of the evaluation, URA may seek the views of relevant local community groups and agencies before giving approval.

Submission Procedures

A submission to URA is to be made online via: [URA e-Services](#) (Apply for Category 3 Works for Conserved Buildings)

 **All QR codes of links indexed on Page 59**

d. Mural

Allowable Locations for Murals

Murals are generally allowed on

- **end gable walls**
- **rear boundary walls**
- **blank rear facades**

Key architectural elements like windows, doors, vents, and external spiral staircases cannot be painted over as part of the mural design.

Murals are not allowed on the front facade of shophouses.

Allowable Materials for Murals

All murals must be painted as this is the traditional medium for such artwork and maintains consistency with the heritage character of conserved buildings.

Stickers and decals are not allowed due to their incompatible glossy finish and poor durability.



On end gable wall



On rear boundary wall



Avoid windows on end gable wall



On blank rear facade



On front facade and windows
– **Not Allowed**

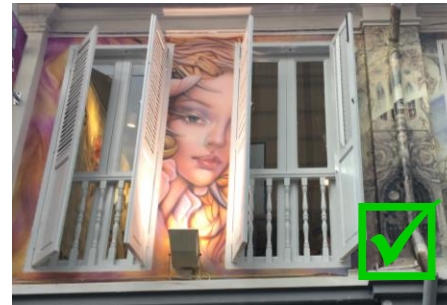


On spiral staircase
– **Not Allowed**

Special Mural Guidelines for Kampong Glam

Particular guidelines for Haji Lane only have been developed together with stakeholders and the Kampong Gelam Alliance (KGA) to allow murals to be painted on the front facades of the buildings. The shophouses here are predominantly of an earlier, simpler architectural style without elaborate ornamentation, allowing for creative expression to reflect the street's unique and eclectic character.

Key architectural elements like windows, doors, and vents cannot be painted over as part of the mural design.



On 2nd storey front facade, but not on windows – Allowed on Haji Lane only



On 1st and 2nd storey front facade but not on windows – Allowed on Haji Lane only



On windows – **Not allowed on Haji Lane and all other Conservation Areas**



d. Mural

In addition, all murals in other streets within Kampong Glam must comply with the following community-established guidelines developed in partnership with KGA:

1. Express and highlight the history, culture, community and commerce of the area;
2. Engage tourists and Singaporeans (especially young people and senior citizens);
3. Subtly present the uniqueness of Kampong Glam;
4. Be site specific and culturally sensitive;
5. Establish the area's distinct identity;
6. Boost visitorship and business;
7. Foster vibrancy, community pride and sense of belonging; and
8. Contain no profanity or negative racial or religious implications.

These murals are to be painted on the allowable locations given in Page 50.

Submission Procedures

Similar to all other murals, a submission to URA is to be made online via: [URA e-Services](#) (Apply for Category 3 Works for Conserved Buildings)

URA will also consult KGA on all mural proposals in Kampong Glam (including Haji Lane) as part of the approval process.

 **All QR codes of links indexed on Page 59**

Content of Murals

Murals must be appropriate to the character of both the building and the surrounding area. The primary purpose of a mural should be to highlight the history and accentuate the uniqueness of the area or community. The design should always strike a balance between promoting mural arts and retaining the established area character.

Murals must not contain profanity or negative racial or religious implications.

Murals also must not contravene prevailing policies and guidelines of other government agencies.



Mural at Muscat Street was developed with direct input from the local community and the support of the building owner, to reflect and showcase the area's heritage.

It has also become an opportunity to educate visitors of the area's history.



4. Maintenance

Tips for Good Maintenance of Conserved Buildings

a. Importance of Regular Maintenance

Regular inspections and proper maintenance are essential for preserving your conserved building's heritage value whilst ensuring it remains a safe and comfortable place to live or work.

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Through conducting regular inspections, maintaining good upkeep, and carrying out correct repairs, well-managed buildings enhance the quality of life for occupants and the broader community.

This proactive approach also ultimately proves more cost-effective whilst increasing the overall financial value of your conserved building.

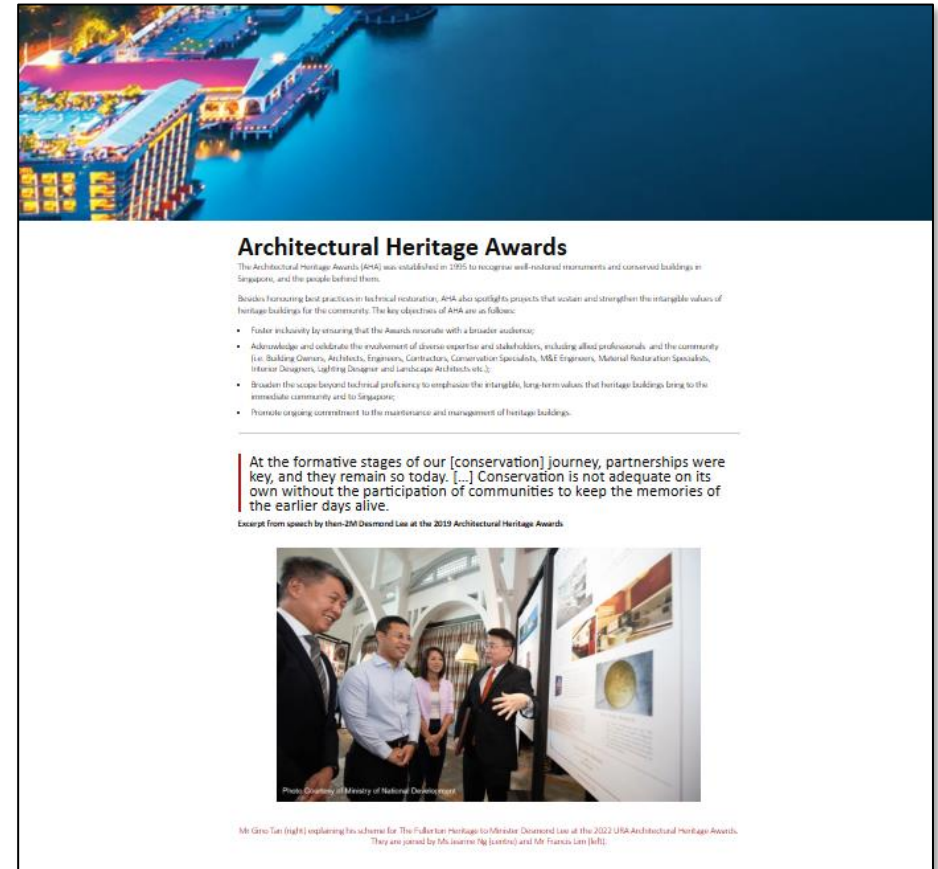


Removal of aggressive plant root underneath the paint

b. Engaging the Right Help

It is worth investing in the right maintenance expertise. Consider hiring a qualified professional to conduct thorough maintenance inspections. They should provide a detailed report that ranks necessary repairs by priority and can supervise any restoration work that follows.

The ideal professional would be either a conservation specialist or an architect with specific expertise in heritage buildings. Standard building professionals typically focus on modern construction techniques, which often proves inadequate for addressing the unique challenges of historic buildings. Additionally, ensure you work with contractors who understand the specialised requirements of heritage building maintenance and restoration.



The Architectural Heritage Award webpage (accessible via <https://go.gov.sg/ahags>) showcases experienced teams recognised for their expertise in restoring and repairing heritage buildings

c. Simple Checks You Can Do Yourself

Even without professional expertise, there are simple checks you can perform regularly using a basic inspection checklist. Early detection of impending decay and deterioration enables you to take timely remedial action more effectively, potentially preventing minor issues from becoming major problems.

A useful sample investigation checklist and accompanying information can be found under Resources and "Assessing the Conditions of Your Building" in Chapter 4 of Volume 1: Introduction of the Conservation Technical Handbook: A Guide for Best Practices.

Back to previous view

RESOURCES | USEFUL WORKSHEETS

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Things you will need:

☐ Inspection checklist- one per side of the building (use the sample below, or prepare your own)

☐ Floor plans, if available

☐ Pen/pencil & notebook

☐ Camera/binoculars

☐ Flashlight

☐ Ladder

☐ Metal probe



Sample Checklist:

Investigating your Building's Condition



Have you read *Assessing the Condition of Your Building* in Chapter 4?

WHERE DO I START?

Start from the ground level. Use a ladder only when areas are too high to reach or see using binoculars or the zoom function of your camera.

Adopt a systematic approach. Inspect one side at a time, recording your observations on the checklist.

BUILDING SURROUNDINGS	YES	NO	REMARKS/OBSERVATIONS
Is there any water ponding, clogged drains, or poor drainage around the building?	☐	☐	
Are there any trees or plants that are growing very near to the building, causing moisture to accumulate on the walls?	☐	☐	
Are there any lightning protection strips that are broken?	☐	☐	

ROOF	YES	NO	REMARKS/OBSERVATIONS
Are there any missing/broken parts of the roof? If the roof is pitched, is the roof ridge straight?	☐	☐	
(For tile roofs only) Are there missing or broken tiles?	☐	☐	
(For metal roofs only) Do you see any corrosion? Does the metal look like it is wearing thin?	☐	☐	
Is there any sagging?	☐	☐	
Are there any leaks when it rains?	☐	☐	
Are there any plants/algae/moss/mould growing?	☐	☐	
Are there any bird/wasp/insect nests inside the roof?	☐	☐	

CONSERVATION TECHNICAL HANDBOOK | Volume 1 | Introduction

Sample Investigation Checklist from the Conservation Technical Handbook

d. Next Steps

When your inspection reveals a problem, the next question is whether you can address it yourself, engage a general contractor, or need a conservation specialist. Matching the right level of expertise to the issue helps you act quickly on simpler matters while ensuring complex problems receive the specialist attention they need.

Some maintenance tasks are straightforward enough that a competent general contractor can carry them out safely and effectively.

Other defects involve historic fabric or complex mechanisms of deterioration that general contractors are not trained to diagnose or repair correctly. Attempting these without specialist knowledge risks causing irreversible damage to the building's historic character.

*This refers to small-scale interventions to specific areas only, not complete replacement of the conserved element. Refer to information on Category 3 submissions on Page 9, and examples of like-for-like replacements on Pages 15 and 18.

Minor works suitable for a general contractor

- **Clearing plant growth** from external walls, roofs, and ceilings
- **Unblocking roof gutters and downpipes.** Regular clearing prevents damp from penetrating walls and floors.
- **Pest and termite treatment.** Standard pest control measures can be carried out by a licensed contractor, though any follow-up repair to affected timber should be assessed by a specialist first.
- **Like-for-like replacement of minor elements.** Small components such as roof tiles, glass panels can be replaced on a one-for-one basis by a general contractor, provided the replacement material matches the original in material, size, and finish.

Conditions that require a specialist

- **Rising damp.** Damp travelling upward through masonry walls from the ground requires careful diagnosis to distinguish it from other moisture sources.
- **Rust and corrosion of structural or decorative metalwork.**
- **Deterioration of timber elements.** Rot, structural weakening, or insect damage to original timber joinery, columns, beams, or flooring should be assessed by a specialist who can determine best course of action.
- **Spalling, cracking, or delamination of masonry.** Surface failure of bricks, stone, or render may signal deeper structural movement or moisture problems.
- **Deterioration of original finishes and decorative features.**

6. Useful Links

Conservation Guidelines

<https://go.gov.sg/conservationguidelines>

Access the full list of planning parameters and guidelines for conserved buildings.

Additions & Alterations

<https://go.gov.sg/conservationadditionsalterations>

Find out more about the application process for making additions and alterations to conserved buildings.

Signage Guidelines

<https://go.gov.sg/conservationsignageguidelines>

Access the full list of Signage Guidelines and learn more about how you can apply for Conservation Permission for Signages on your conserved building.

Emerald Hill Traditional Paint Scheme Guidelines

<https://go.gov.sg/emeraldhillpaintscheme>

Find out more about the paint scheme guidelines and process for conserved buildings at Emerald Hill Conservation Area.



6. Useful Links

Approved Uses

<https://go.gov.sg/approveduse-shophouses>

Check the allowable and the last approved uses for all private shophouses & selected properties in Singapore.

Definition of URA Use Classes

<https://go.gov.sg/urauseclass>

Find out more about the legal definitions for each type of use under the URA Use Class framework

Use of Buildings in Conservation Areas

<https://go.gov.sg/conservationuse>

Find out more about the types of uses that are allowed in conserved buildings.

GoBusiness Singapore (Change of Use Applications)

<https://go.gov.sg/urachangeofuseapproval>

Use this service to apply for planning permission to change the use of your property.



6. Useful Links

BCA e-Services (Advertisement Licensing System)

<https://go.gov.sg/bcae-services-advertisementlicence>

Submit your signage application to the Advertisement Licensing Department of BCA, who will consult URA internally for clearance



Conservation e-Services

<https://go.gov.sg/conservatione-services>

Access the full list of e-Services from applications for Category 3 works for Conserved Buildings to requests for Specific Restoration Guidelines.



Architectural Heritage Awards

<https://go.gov.sg/ahasg>

Access the list of past Architectural Heritage Award winners and their portfolios for reference.



7. Contact Us

**For enquiries and feedback on this guide,
please contact us at :**

www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/Contact-Us

Address:

Conservation Department
45 Maxwell Road, The URA Centre
Singapore 069118



View this guide and others online:

<https://go.gov.sg/conservationbestpractices>

- Conservation Technical Handbooks
- Do-It-Right Guides



For more information on conservation areas and
conserved buildings:

<https://go.gov.sg/uraconsportal>



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