

# Your Shophouse: Do It Right


Our Shared Heritage: A Quick Guide for Owners and Tenants

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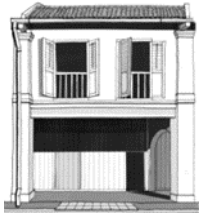

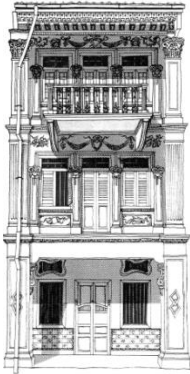
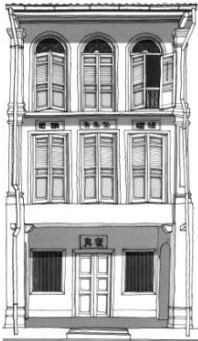
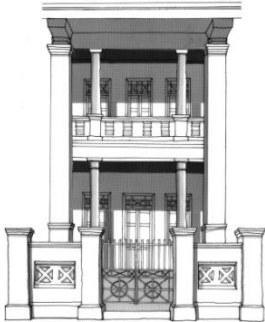
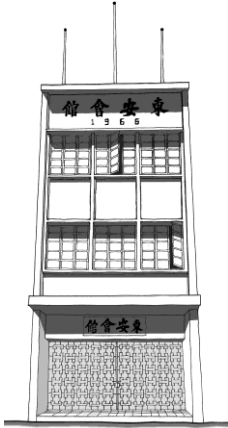
There are over 6,500 conserved shophouses in Singapore. Built between the early-1800s and mid-1900s, these heritage buildings continue to be an important part of our cityscape and serve as a link to our past.

In the contemporary landscape, many of them have been adapted to new uses. It is important that works to them do not change their architecture.

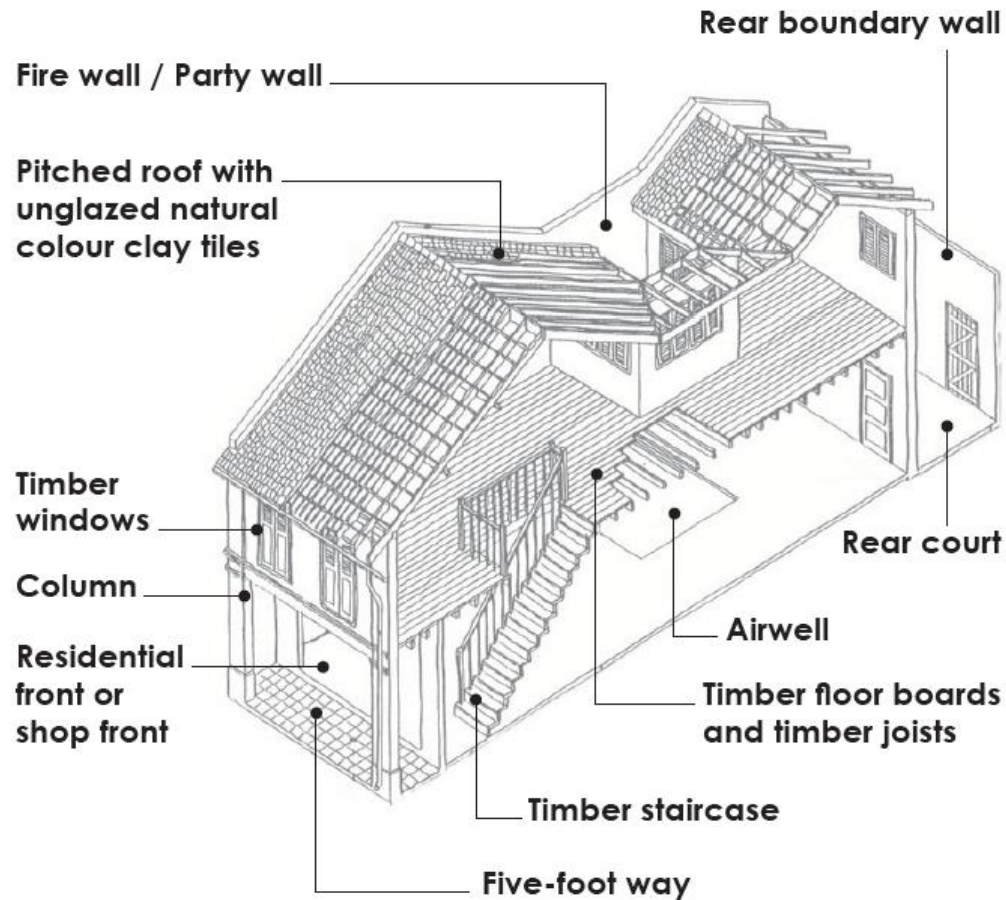
This publication is a quick guide to common works. It covers some of the good conservation practices which owners can adopt to avoid some common pitfalls.



# Shophouse Typology

Early Shophouse Style	First Transitional Shophouse Style	Late Shophouse Style	Second Transitional Shophouse Style	Art Deco Shophouse Style	Modern Shophouse Style
<p>Shophouses of this style are shorter and have one or two timber windows on the upper storey facade. The early builders made use of locally-sourced construction materials. Plaster ornamentation is minimal.</p>	<p>With increased wealth and an influx of skilled labour, shophouses became taller and decorated with plaster and tile. Addition of small panels of glass into the timber windows became increasingly common.</p>	<p>This is the most spectacular style, particularly in the extensive use of plaster, tile and cast iron ornamentation. Each upper storey facade has three windows with minimal wall in between for maximum ventilation.</p>	<p>Shophouses of this style are simpler and more streamlined as builders began to cut down on the use of ornamentation; perhaps as a reaction to the exuberant spirit of the Late style and to the economic situation of the time.</p>	<p>The Art Deco style is typified by streamlining of classical motifs such as column orders, arches and pediments into geometric designs. A common feature is a plaque with the date of the building's construction. Shanghai Plaster was also a popular surface treatment.</p>	<p>Common features are the innovative use of thin concrete fins and air vents which are functional as well as decorative. Flat roofs became the norm. Mild steel windows complemented the geometric facade.</p>
					
1840	1900	1910	1930	1940	1950
1840 – 1900	Early 1900s	1900 – 1940	Late 1930s	1930 – 1960	1950 – 1960

# Parts of a Shophouse



The **Pitched Roof** is normally finished with unglazed natural colour V-profile clay tiles.

The **Columns** at the front of the building form the five-foot way colonnades and support the upper floors.

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

The **Timber Windows** on the upper storeys are either French windows with internal balustrades or casement windows with timber shutters.

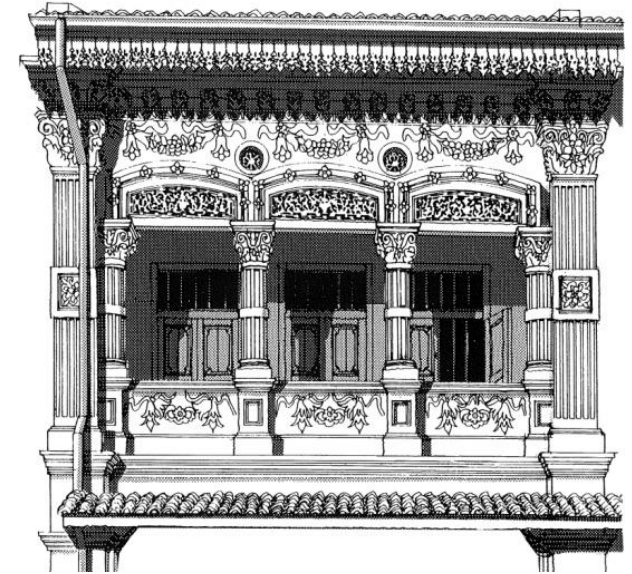
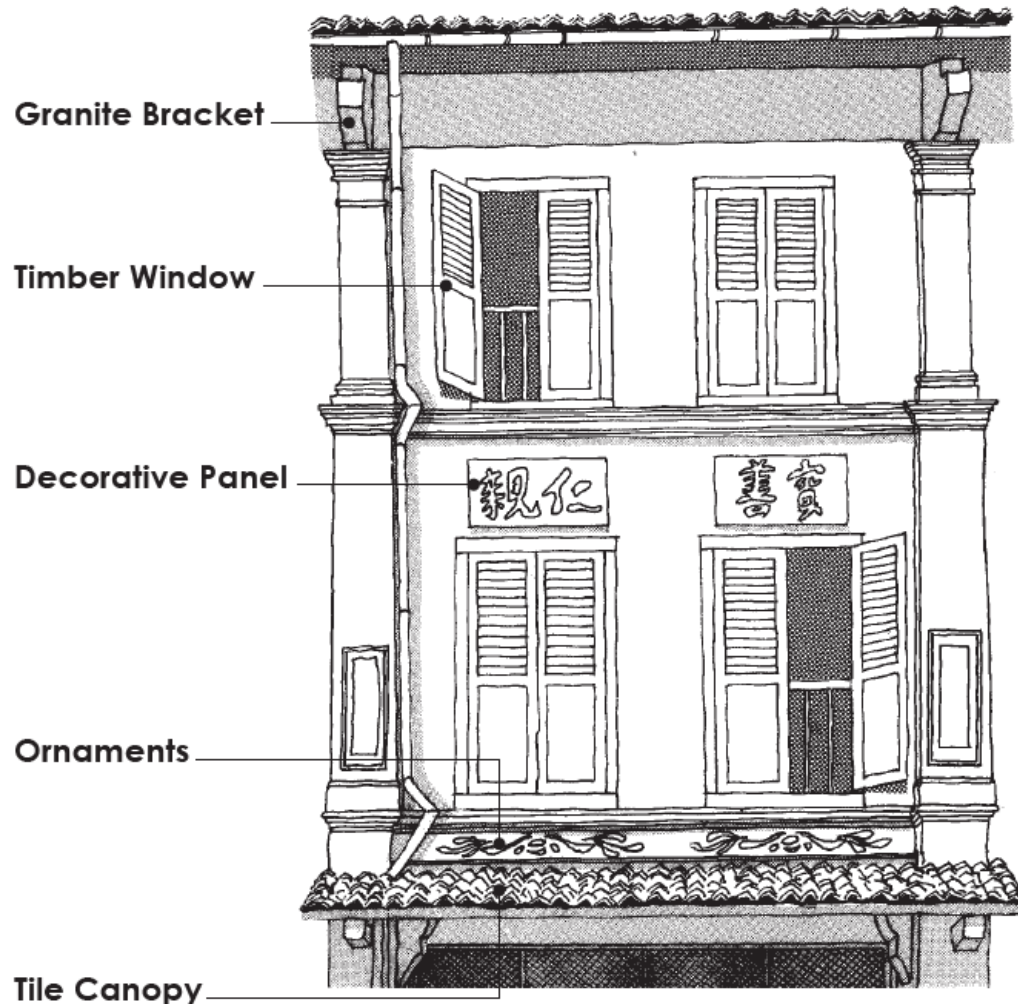
There is either a **Residential Front** or **Shop Front** at the first storey, depending on the original building use.

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.

# The Upper Storey

## Common Features of the Upper Storey Facade



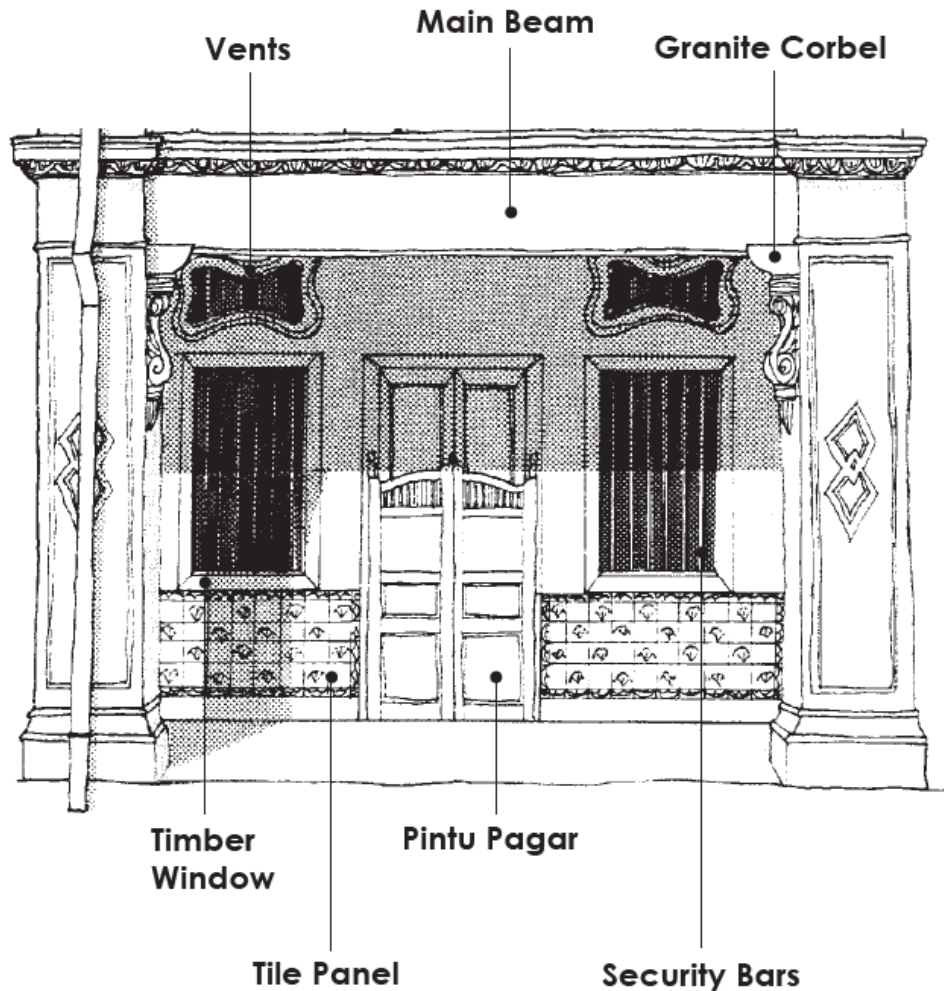
### **Open Balcony**

Some shophouses have open balconies with an inner facade. This is an attractive tropical design feature. The balcony should not be enclosed and the inner facade with the original windows, doors and transoms are to be kept.



# The First Storey

## Common Features of the Residential Front



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

A **Residential Front**, as shown, typically has a central door with windows on both sides.

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.

# Special Finishes

Some buildings have special wall finishes which give them a distinctive look. To keep the original character these finishes should not be painted over.



## Ceramic Tiles

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



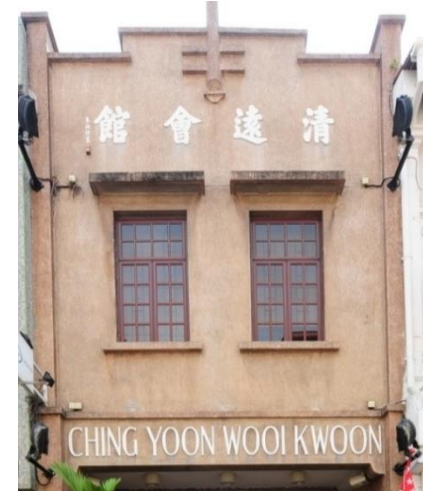
## 'Fair-faced' Brickwork

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.





## Decorative Features

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



"Jian Nian" ornament formed with broken ceramic pieces



Decorative scroll

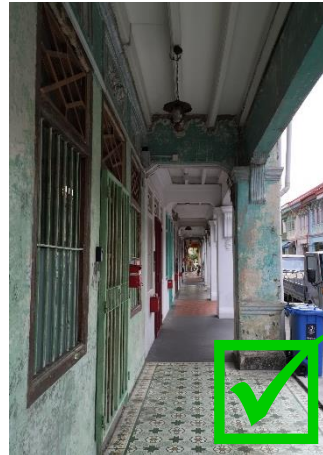
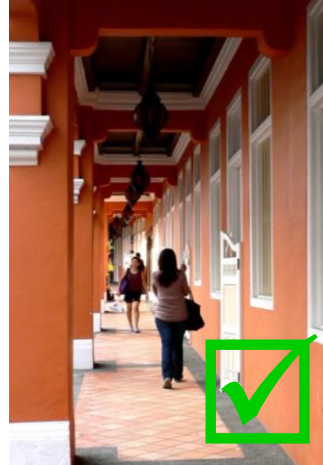


Original granite column base



Original granite corbel

## Five-Foot Way







Pedestrian safety should be taken into account when installing fixtures such as letterboxes. Sharp corners and projecting surfaces should be avoided. Preferably, such fixtures should be integrated into the design of the building. The five-foot way should be kept clear for pedestrian flow.



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.

Owners are encouraged to keep or reinstate the traditional floor finishes as this contributes to the overall character of the building and street.

# Five-Foot Way

Traditional Five-Foot Way Finishes							
Early							
First Transitional							
Late							
Second Transitional							
Art Deco							
Modern							



# Quick Guides

**Allowable Works & Submission Procedures**

## Submission Procedure

### **What should I do if I want to put up a new sign on my shophouse?**

- 1) Refer to pages 15 & 16 for the allowable locations for a new sign.
- 2) Submit an application to the Advertisement Licensing Department of BCA, who will consult URA internally for clearance.

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.

- 3) Put up the signage only after approval has been given.

### **What happens if there is no approval for my sign?**

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

### Application to BCA

An application for a licence is to be submitted online via:

### **BCA eServices (Advertisement Licensing System):**

<https://eservices.bca.gov.sg/advertisementlicence>

### Application to URA

An application to URA is to be submitted online via:

### **URA e-Services (Apply for Category 3 Works for Conserved Buildings):**

<https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/E-Services/Conservation>

More details on signage requirements are available online:

<https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/Guidelines/Conservation/Signage>

# Signage

## 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.





# Signage

## Traditional Building Signs



# Signage

## 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 more information, please refer to 'Part 4: Signage Guidelines' of the Conservation Guidelines and the Signages: Do It Right (<https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/Guidelines/Conservation/Signage>).



Signs on the forecourt wall



Sign on first storey column



Signs within five-foot way



Sign above the front door



# Signage

## Allowable Locations for Signs



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



Signs projected from second storey pilaster



Signs on the gable end wall



Sign on the main beam



Sign on the rear boundary wall



Signs on the gable end wall



# Air-Conditioning Unit

## Submission Procedure

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

- 1) Refer to page 18 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.

An application to URA is to be submitted online via:

**URA e-Services (Apply for Category 3 Works for Conserved Buildings):**

<https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/E-Services/Conservation>

The submission must be endorsed by the building owner.

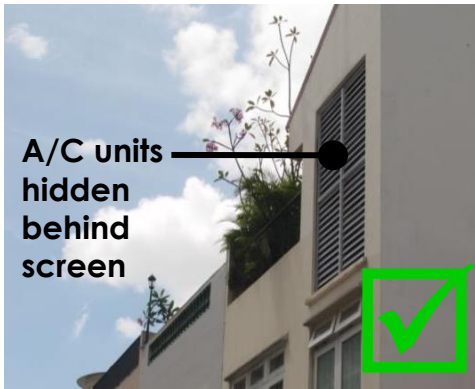
# Air-Conditioning Unit

## Allowable Locations for Air-Conditioning Units

Air-conditioning (A/C) units should be installed at the rear of the shophouse and be properly screened.



A/C units should not be installed on the front facade.



Proper screening on the rear wall of the shophouse.

### A/C under roof of rear service block

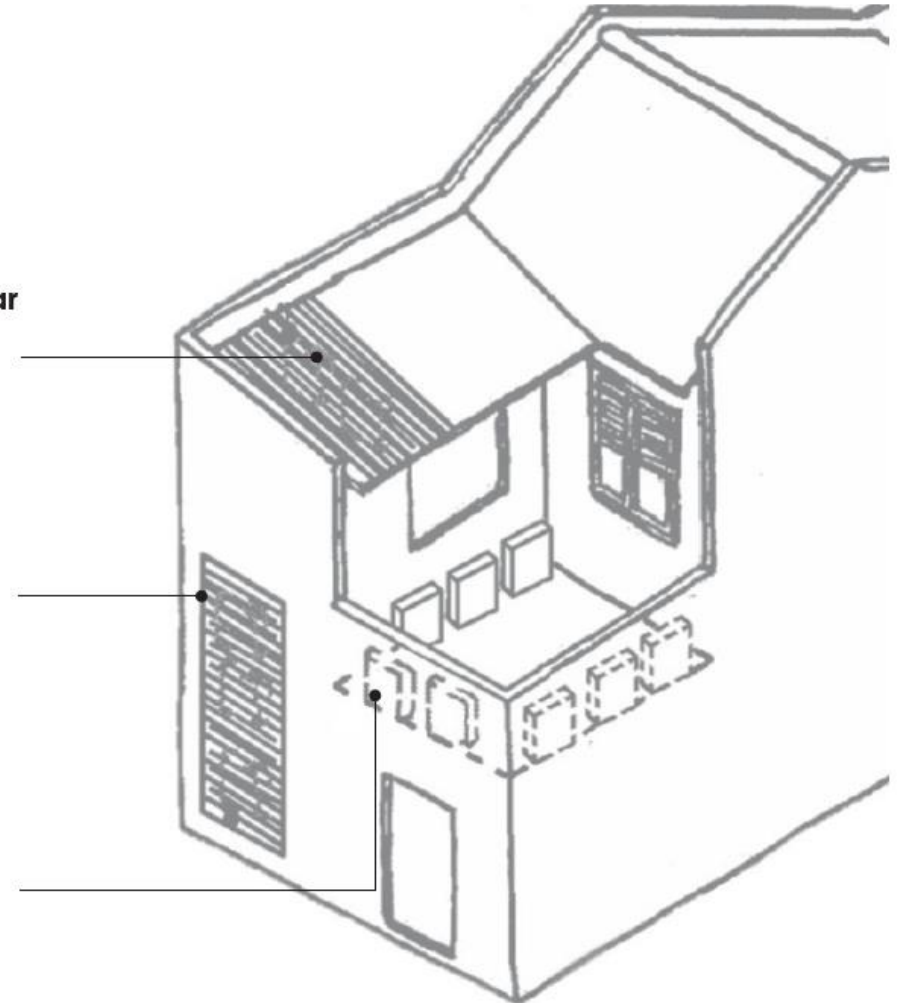
Opening is covered with screening

### A/C behind rear boundary wall

Opening is covered with screening

### A/C behind parapet wall

A/C units are not to be visible from street level. Otherwise, screening is to be provided.



# Building Colour & Paint

Owners are to use colour scheme that complements the heritage character and highlights the features of the building. Please refer to pages 20 & 21 for examples of good practices.

For buildings with special finishes and/or ornaments, they should not be painted over. Please refer to pages 7 & 8 for examples. If these special features are painted over, you will be required to remove the paintwork.

## Special Colour Schemes for Streets or Precincts

Special colour schemes based on good practice can be adopted for conserved buildings in a street or precinct if there is collective agreement between owners. Such proposals can be submitted to URA ([www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/Contact-Us](http://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/Contact-Us)) for consideration.

A special colour scheme is applicable for the Emerald Hill Conservation Area. Please refer to page 22 for details of the scheme.

## Buildings & Areas with Colour Control

Some buildings are characterised by their colour scheme -

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

The same colour shall be used in repainting these buildings.



Red House, 75 East Coast Road



# Building Colour & Paint

Shophouses were originally painted with lime wash. This permeable, 'breathable' finish to the wall surface gave the building a soft, pastel hue. In repainting historic buildings, lime wash or its modern day equivalents e.g. mineral paint, should be used to retain this breathable quality.

One of the most common colours in the early days was an indigo blue hue. In later years, the availability of more pigments gave rise to pastel shades of green, yellow, pink, blue and beige.

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





# Building Colour & Paint



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

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

## Not Allowed

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.



# Emerald Hill Traditional Paint Scheme

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 Level 12 of the URA Centre at 45 Maxwell Road.



An application to URA is to be submitted online via:

**URA e-Services (Apply for Category 3 Works for Conserved Buildings):**

<https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/E-Services/Conservation>

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

Please refer to the Step-By-Step guide (<http://bit.ly/emeraldhillpaint>) for more information.



Examples of appropriate paint schemes



# Murals

Murals can be allowed on end gable walls of shophouses. The murals must be appropriate to the character of the area. Through mural art, there is also the opportunity to bring out the history and accentuate the uniqueness of each area or community. They should not contain profanity, negative racial or religious implications.

Murals at other locations of a conserved building can be considered but are subjected to evaluation. There is a need to balance between retaining the character of an area and promoting mural arts.

An application to URA is to be submitted online via:

**URA e-Services (Apply for Category 3 Works for Conserved Buildings):**

<https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/E-Services/Conservation>)

The submission must be endorsed by the building owner.



Mural on 'Porcelain' hotel, Mosque Street



Mural of a Hokkien Junk, Amoy Street

## Additions & Alterations Works

Works listed in this guide are mainly **Category 3 Works**. These are minimal and localised, and/or for the purpose of repair or maintenance of the conserved buildings.

Building works classified under **Category 3 Works** do not require submission by a Registered Architect or Professional Engineer. The submission can be made by owners or their contractors.

Examples of Category 3 Works:

- Change in material of five-footway tiles
- Installation of air-conditioning units

An application to URA is to be submitted online via **URA e-Services (Apply for Category 3 Works for Conserved Buildings)**:

<https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/E-Services/Conservation>

There are other types of works that require a formal submission to URA. These are classified as **Category 1 and Category 2 Works**.

These works affect key elements of conserved buildings. They may involve major structural works and have a significant impact on the heritage appearance, architectural character and spatial integrity of the conserved building.

**For more information on Additions & Alterations Works, please visit:**

<https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/Guidelines/Conservation/Additions-Alterations>

## Useful Links

### Conservation Guidelines

<https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/Guidelines/Conservation/Conservation-Guidelines>



### Additions & Alterations Works

<https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/Guidelines/Conservation/Additions-Alterations>



### Signage Guidelines & Do It Right

<https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/Guidelines/Conservation/Signage>



### URA E-Services

<https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/E-Services/Conservation>





# Contact Us

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

[www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/Contact-Us](http://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/Contact-Us)

Address:

Conservation Department

12<sup>th</sup> Storey

45 Maxwell Road, The URA Centre

Singapore 069118

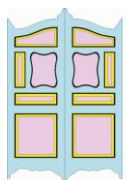
View this guide online:

<https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/Guidelines/Conservation/Best-Practices>



For more information on conservation areas and conserved buildings:

<http://www.ura.gov.sg/consportal>



**My  
Conservation  
Portal**





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