

Rear Facade

Available parking in Downtown St. Charles, particularly for Main Street businesses, is so often located behind buildings that rear or side entrances are warranted. Areas behind buildings often are forgotten or neglected. Customers tend to avoid rear entrances because these areas can be unkempt and unattractive. The rears of most buildings are commonly thought of as service areas where deliveries are made or the garbage is picked up. However, a large percentage of existing and developing parking lots are located adjacent to or abutting these entrances. The rears of the buildings are coming into full and open view. The appearances of rear block areas are especially important to St. Charles because of their high visibility from side streets.

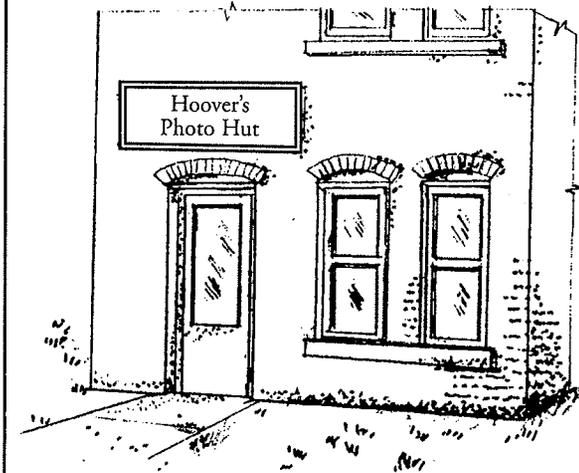
A combination of front entrances with side or rear entrances is called "double fronting." There are certain advantages to this, including:

- ◆ Enhanced circulation patterns.
- ◆ Better access to off-street parking.
- ◆ Store identity created on more than one side of the building.

Double fronting may, in isolated cases, create disadvantages, including increases in:

- ◆ Initial cost of remodeling.
- ◆ Maintenance costs of additional doors, windows and sidewalks.
- ◆ Security.

REAR FACADE SHOWING AN INVITING ENTRANCE WITH LARGE DOOR WINDOW.



REAR ENTRANCE VIEW OF FOX ISLAND SQUARE (ILLINOIS STREET) DEMONSTRATING AMPLE PARKING AND WELL-MAINTAINED LANDSCAPING.



Photo courtesy of David Behrens.

If you do not have an attractive, “customer friendly” rear entrance but are considering improvements, ask yourself these questions:

- ◆ How would added, walk-through traffic help my business?
- ◆ Would a rear entrance be an added convenience for my customers?
- ◆ What changes would I have to make to my store for an attractive rear entry?
- ◆ How would I handle security, displays and circulation through the store?
- ◆ Where do my customers typically park?

Like the storefront, the rear entry should respect its neighbors. An attempt to make your entrance compatible with surrounding businesses should be a priority. Look at the back entrances next to yours before you make any changes. Work with your neighbors to create unity in this all-too-often ignored area.

The rear entry should not compete with the storefront in importance, but like the front, the back entry requires identification. A rear-door window panel is one way to identify and open your store to customers. A small sign on or near the door is another identifier. Be sure to keep it small and do not clutter the area with too many signs. An awning is a pleasant addition and a convenience to shoppers during inclement weather.

Normal service activities, such as trash collection, loading and shipping, also must occur with ease. It is possible to accommodate these functions and make the rear spaces enjoyable “people places” at the same time. Pick a central location for trash collection, which will serve several stores efficiently. Simple enclosures can be constructed to hide dumpsters and to prevent clutter. Before construction, be sure you consult the collection agency to ensure that your design will not disrupt pick-up services.

Plantings either can add or detract from a rear building area. If there is enough sun, planter boxes may be utilized as an attractive buffering element, but only if you are committed to caring for them properly. Weeds are a detracting and visually negative element in poorly paved and unattended areas. Planting ground cover in exposed soil areas can help choke out weeds. For a better image, keep all plantings under control and consistently well maintained.

Snow removal is as important to a rear entrance as it is to a front entrance. Customers are unlikely to come into a business that does not take the time and care to shovel all walkways.

With good design and proper maintenance, these rear entrances can become attractive and convenient for shoppers and highly beneficial to Downtown St. Charles businesses.

"The rear entry should not compete with the storefront in importance. .

. .however, with careful planning, execution and continued maintenance, rear entrances can become an attractive and convenient asset to the store, its customers and to Downtown St. Charles."