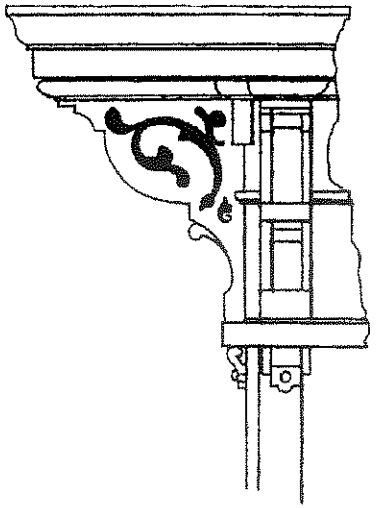


Building Project Categories

Like the commercial district's historic structures, each downtown building project is unique and full of hidden dimensions. However, most work falls into one of the following categories:

Preservation—For buildings that have experienced little change through time

Preservation is essentially retaining and properly maintaining the existing historic aspects of a building. Buildings that retain and reflect the historic character of the district serve as the backbone among new and altered structures. It is impossible to overstate the importance of maintenance. As buildings weather, deteriorate, age, and erode, maintenance is easy to postpone. Simple preventative measures such as caulking windows, repainting exposed and worn surfaces, and guarding against water leakage are time proven money savers.

Restoration—For buildings that have gone through some change

Breckenridge and Wahpeton both have buildings that are historically and/or architecturally significant, but have been altered. Restoration is the process of returning the structure to its original appearance. Restoration, however, does not imply the creation of a precious museum piece. The structure must have economic viability in order to justify restoration.

Renovation—For buildings that have been modified extensively

Many buildings benefit from some degree of renovation using modern materials and techniques that convey the character of missing original features. But it is important to preserve the integrity of an aged building. Renovation often involves the undoing of previous generations of maintenance, such as removing layers of old paint, peeling off applied wood siding, and uncovering original floors. This process involves stripping away one or more layers of "modernization."

Recycle—For buildings that have outlived their original use

New uses can be found for single purpose older buildings. Railway stations, warehouses, hotels, and banks are all examples of single-use structures. Here, the challenge is to recycle buildings, whose original use is obsolete, by finding new uses that add to the economic vitality of the downtowns.

Redesign—For buildings which are basically sound but do not enhance the streetscape

Inevitably there will be a certain number of buildings which are basically sound, but do not enhance the historic character the city wishes to express. These buildings can be redesigned to support the historic downtowns. There is often much latitude in the redesign of such structures. However, it is important that the new facade appear appropriate and compatible in the context of the overall streetscape.

Demolition—For buildings that are structurally unsound or visually intrusive

In some cases, renovation is no longer a cost effective solution for a neglected building. When a building has outlived its stability and purpose, demolition may be justified. In such cases, opportunities for the creation of open space, off-street parking and/or new development should be carefully studied. Any contemplated new use should be designed to complement the character of the streetscape.

New Construction—For filling gaps in the streetscape

An important element in a historic downtown is the quality of infill construction. The desired effect of new construction in a district is to complement existing structures. It is important that new construction not be allowed to dominate or overpower its more historic neighbors. Its basic design elements (size, mass, material, color) must be compatible with surrounding structures. These guidelines will suggest ways of achieving this goal.

Early 20th Century "bird's eye" view of downtown Wahpeton looking to the north and west.

Planning for Rehabilitation

Evaluate Your Building

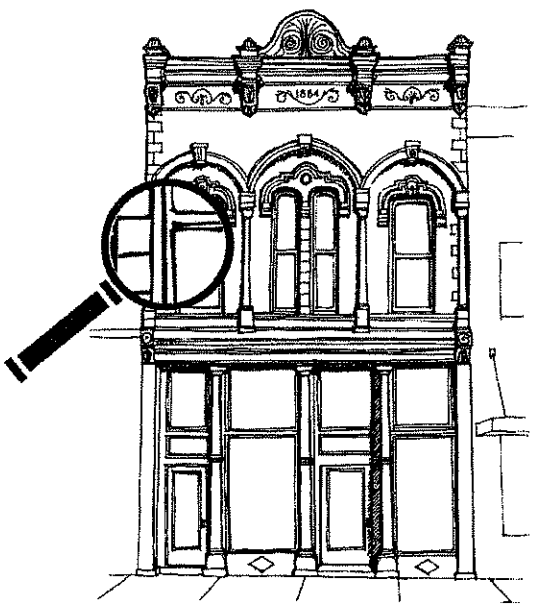
Look closely at your building. A visual inspection often reveals where past changes have been made. Look at similar buildings along the street that may not have had major alterations. Look for historic photographs. Downtown area photographs may be found at the local and state historical societies. Search through storage areas, basements, and attics for missing facade elements.

Set A Budget

Once you have a good idea what your building looked like, you will need to decide what you can afford to do. Don't feel that you have to do a total renovation at once. While your plan should reflect an overall approach, you may want to complete the actual work in phases. Keep in mind that there are potential sources of assistance. Federal tax incentives, accelerated depreciation, or tax credits may also be available and should be explored as part of your budget planning. (See page 10)

Decide On An Approach

The previous section described six typical facade improvement options. Your project may fit into one of these categories or it may straddle categories. Let your budget and your building be your guides. Pay special attention to the impact of your plans on neighboring buildings and on the downtown streetscape.



Apply the Design Guidelines

With these guidelines, applicable building codes and ordinances, the cities of Breckenridge and Whapeton can provide design direction for building improvement projects that impact the historic character of the two downtowns.

The design guidelines in this manual cover most of the issues likely to arise in the course of facade remodeling. They are intended to illustrate the kinds of renovation approaches and details most likely to require city review and approval. The cities will be able to give additional guidance in special situations. Remember that the goal is to promote and to preserve the historic character of the downtown commercial districts as a sound economic development tool.

It is recommended that some of the guidelines be incorporated into the city ordinance to preserve the integrity of structures that are historic in nature. This activity would include identifying and providing

Financial Incentives for Building Owners

While there are many reasons to preserve, restore, rehabilitate, and recycle old buildings, financial incentives can be the most tangible. Financial incentives for rehabilitation have been developed on the local, state, and national levels. Contact the local development offices for a complete listing of finance programs. For Wahpeton: Economic Development, 701-642-8559. For Breckenridge: Port Authority/ Community Development, 218-643-2733.

Historic Preservation Tax Credits

Historic Preservation Tax Credits are available to building owners interested in substantially rehabilitating old buildings. Commercial structures that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places or within a National Register district qualify for a 20% investment tax credit. Income-producing, non-residential buildings over 50 years old qualify for a 10% investment tax credit.

Other Tax Incentives

In North Dakota business owners may qualify for income and property tax exemptions and credits for purchasing, leasing or making improvements to real property located in a "Renaissance Zone District." An income or financial institution tax credit is also allowed to taxpayers who invest in a renaissance fund organization established by a Renaissance Zone.

Facade Easement

A building facade can be donated to a preservation organization such as the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota and Preservation North Dakota, and leased back to the building owners to provide preservation tax benefits. The program is most beneficial for historic buildings requiring major investment. For more information contact the North Dakota and Minnesota State Historic Preservation offices.

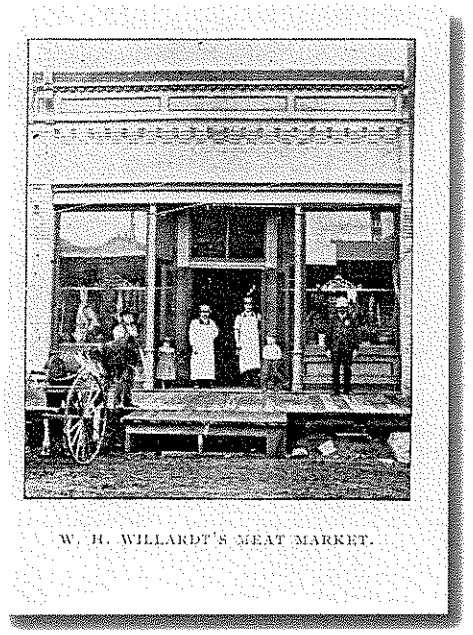
National Trust Preservation Loan Fund

The National Trust for Historic Preservation issues grants to increase the flow of information and ideas in the field of preservation, stimulate public discussion, enable local groups to gain the technical expertise needed for particular projects, introduce students to preservation concepts and crafts, and encourage participation by the private sector in preservation. For more information contact The National Trust at *www.nationaltrust.org*.

Additional information about these programs and incentive programs can be found at the HPS (Heritage Preservation Services) website: *www.nps.gov/history/hps/*

Basic Architectural Design in Downtowns

Many of the early builders in Breckenridge and Wahpeton tried to establish a sense of stability and permanence in the community, constructing solid buildings made first of wood and then materials such as stone and brick. Most of the key buildings within the downtown areas were built in the late-1800s and early 1900s and many of them remain relatively intact, architecturally. The major changes that have taken place were in response to changing fashions in merchandising and perhaps more significantly in an attempt to be "modern and up-to-date." A constant reminder of the historic material existing today is the wealth of visually interesting details on these buildings at the roof line which have changed less from the forces of commerce and fashion than have the storefronts.



Late 19th century photograph of the Willardt's Meat Market displays the large expanses of plate glass commonly used to provide day-lighting and accommodate ample display. Note the verticality of the original storefront fenestration.

Storefronts

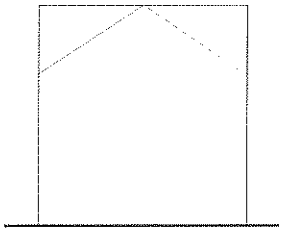
The most important feature of commercial buildings is the storefront. An emphasis on transparency is created by the use of thin structural members framing large sheets of plate glass. The large windows display merchandise and facilitate window-shopping. Below the display windows are base panels called bulkheads that are made of stone, wood or metal. The entry door is recessed. This provides cover and prevents disturbance of sidewalk traffic. The recessed door also visually draws customers into the building. Above the entry door and the display windows, and separated by a structural member, is the transom. The transom allows natural light into the store, which originally did not have sufficient artificial light. Often transoms were made of frosted or small glass panels. A cornice caps the storefront. The storefront cornice, often similar in design but smaller than the primary cornice that crowns the building, creates a visual separation between the public and private parts of the building.

Additional elements may also exist on a building's facade. These include awnings, window hoods, brackets, and columns. These elements are used to emphasize the lines and shapes of the facade. Awnings were used extensively in the original designs to provide protection from the elements, to advertise the business name, and to add color and interest to the historic streetscape.

Historic Building Types in the Downtowns

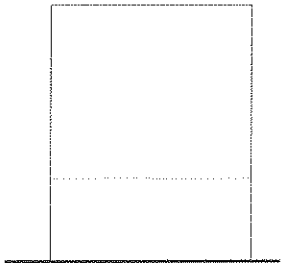
The Boomtown Block

Boomtown architecture refers to the 1-2 story, woodframe commercial buildings built in the late 19th century, which lacked the detailing of a formal style. The Boomtown type usually has a false front upper-facade that conceals the true roofline, giving the building the appearance of more mass, epitomizing the minimum of style, and the maximum of utility. A remaining example of this style is the structure at 308 and 512 Dakota Avenue.



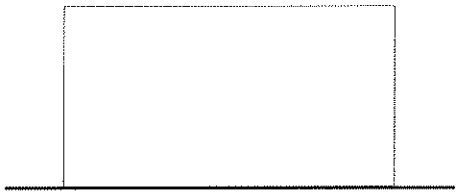
The Two-Part Commercial Block

The most common building type in downtowns is the two-part commercial block. This building type, ranging from two to three stories, has a distinct separation between the first level, or public space, and the upper stories, or private spaces. The lower level of this building type is generally commercial in nature: a store, restaurant, walk-in office, etc. The upper level is generally private in nature: living quarters, offices, meeting rooms, etc. This commercial block type, dating from Roman antiquity and common during the late middle-ages, was prevalent in the United States from the 1850s to the 1950s. Good examples of this building type are the Eucene Schuler Block at 413 Dakota Avenue as designed in 1882, and the Benesh Pierce Block at Minnesota and 5th in Breckenridge.



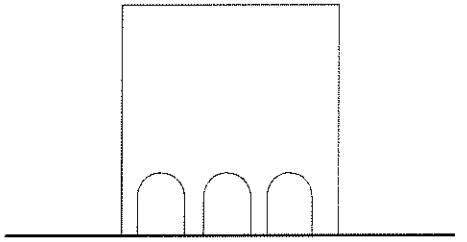
The One-Part Commercial Block

The one-part block is essentially the storefront level of the two-part commercial block without the private quarters above the store. During the Victorian era and the early twentieth century, the one-part commercial block often housed a bank or other financial institution. This type is represented historically by the classically designed National Bank Building at 418 Dakota Avenue, constructed in 1915, and the financial structure on the northeast corner of 5th and Minnesota in Breckenridge.



Arcaded Block

The arcaded block is distinguished by a series of arched openings on a long elevation. Derived from the arcaded porches of the Renaissance, this type was generally built during the early twentieth century. The arcaded block is illustrated in the Wahpeton Post Office with its repeating large arches, built in 1914.



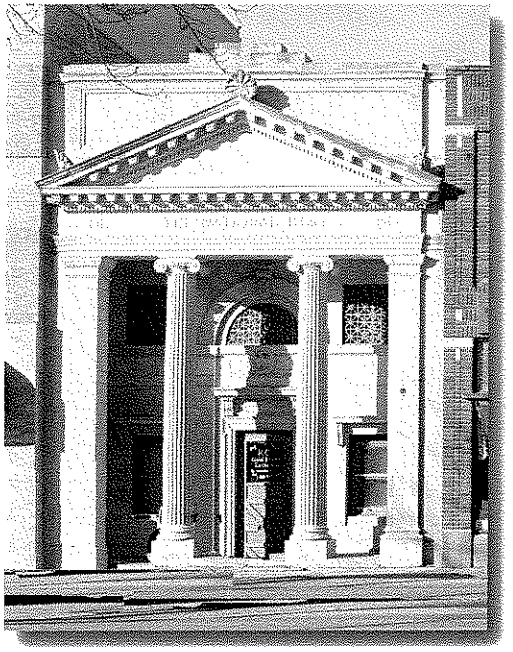
Historic Building Styles in the Downtowns

Buildings of a similar type provide continuity for the downtown. Differences in style create visual variety and help to distinguish one building from another. These differences result from what was popular at the time of construction, the use of the building, or the whim of the designer, builder, or owner. Learning about the style of one's building can help answer many preservation questions, including those regarding original treatments, color schemes, and what should replace missing elements.

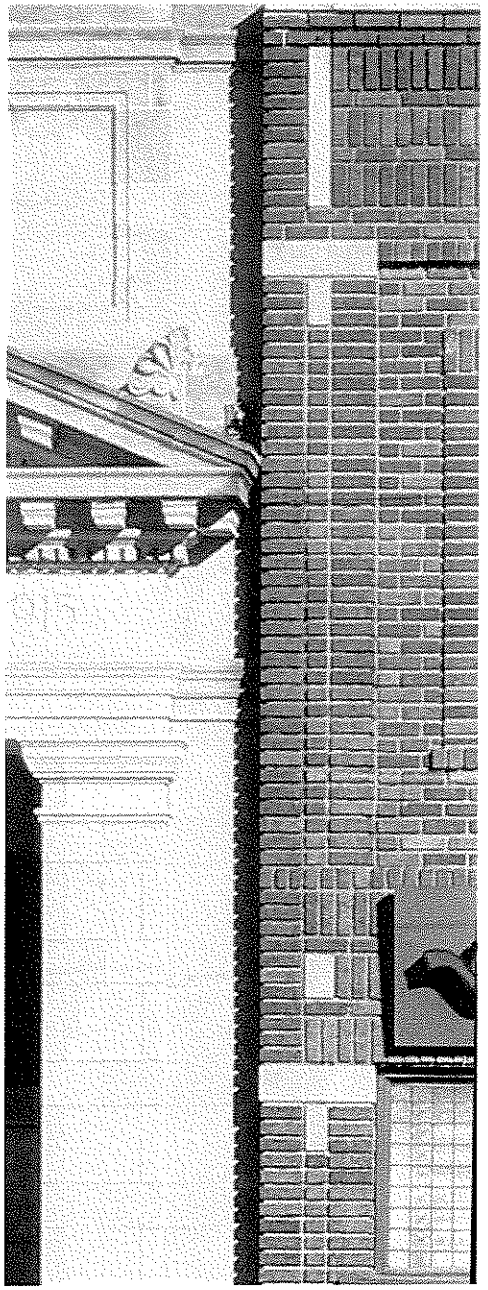
The majority of the historic buildings in the two downtowns were constructed during the 1880s through the 1920s. During this time, most commercial buildings in smaller communities throughout the United States were a derivation of the Italianate style. Common elements distinguishing this style are large, heavily bracketed cornices, decorative window hoods, and semicircular or segmental arch-headed windows. Although high-style examples exist, most Italianate commercial buildings were essentially vernacular, meaning they were constructed in a locally accepted method and form, on which standard (and sometimes prefabricated) decorative elements were placed. The recently renovated Opera House (1892), at 403 Dakota Avenue is a good example of the Italianate vernacular in downtown Wahpeton.

While there are no pure examples of the Romanesque Revival style in either of the downtowns, the Eucene Schuler Building (1897) at 413 Dakota Avenue, with its quarry-faced stone and rounded roman arches has some traits of this style. The style's name came from the extensive use of the rounded arch in early Roman construction. The American architect, Henry Hobson Richardson, in the mid-nineteenth century began using heavy masonry construction and rounded arches. The style quickly developed throughout the country, especially in the construction of warehouses and office buildings. This style was primarily built in brownstone or brick.

The Philadelphia Centennial Exhibit of 1876 led to a renewal of interest in our country's past and in the development of a national architectural style. This, and the increased influence of the Ecole des Beaux Arts of Paris on American architecture, developed into the Classical Revival Style. This was a popular style throughout the country from the 1890s to the 1920s. The main characteristic of this style is a more academically correct use of classical forms including cornices, columns and pilasters, and porticos, etc. A fine example of Classical Revival architecture is seen in the National Bank constructed in 1915 at 418 Dakota Avenue. In Breckenridge, more modest detailing can be seen in the one-story commercial block on the northwest corner of Minnesota Avenue and 5th Street.



The National Bank Building in Wahpeton is an outstanding example of the Classical Revival Style.



Masonry

Masonry is the most popular construction material in the two downtowns. Brick, stone, and to a more limited extent, stucco and concrete block are widely used as structural and exterior finish materials. Regionally quarried stone is also a material found in the downtowns. Its strength and rugged beauty are its chief assets. Concrete block and stucco are a rare and recent addition to the district, and the use of these materials in new construction and in work on historic buildings is not recommended.

Moisture

Masonry should be checked regularly for moisture penetration. Moisture can enter masonry through leaky roofs, gutters or down spouts, poor drainage, or a condition known as rising damp. Rising damp occurs when moisture is drawn up from the ground through brick by capillary action.

Tuckpointing

Repair masonry walls and other masonry features by repointing the mortar joints where there is evidence of deterioration, such as disintegrating mortar, cracks in mortar joints, loose bricks, or damaged plaster work. Remove deteriorated mortar by carefully hand-raking the joints to avoid damaging the masonry. New mortar joints should match the original in style, size, mortar composition, and color. It is especially important to repoint with a mortar of the same hardness as the original, usually two parts sand to one part lime - with up to 20 percent of the lime combined with cement. Harder modern mortars with a high content of Portland cement will resist the warm weather expansion of the brick, causing cracking and spalling of the brick surface. In cold weather, this same inflexibility may cause cracks to open up as the historic bricks contract.

Cleaning

Although cleaning masonry can have a dramatic impact on the appearance of a building, it should nevertheless only be done to halt deterioration, and not merely to attain a 'new' facade. Cleaning generally requires knowledgeable cleaning contractors. The Minnesota and North Dakota State Historic Preservation Offices can provide some information on qualified cleaning contractors who operate in the two states.

Whether owners hire professionals or decide to clean the masonry themselves, masonry should always be cleaned by the gentlest possible method. In many cases low pressure water washing (no more than 220 psi), together with scrubbing with a natural bristle brush, may be sufficient.

If paint or heavy grime must be removed, a chemical cleaner may be required. There are a wide range of chemical cleaners available, and a qualified cleaning contractor should be consulted to evaluate your building and recommend a treatment. Whatever treatment is selected, a test patch should first be tried and allowed to weather for a few weeks or months. If the results of the test are satisfactory and no damage is observed, it should be safe to proceed.

Sandblasting

Sandblasting is especially harmful to brick surfaces, eroding the hard outer layer to expose a softer, more porous surface that will weather rapidly. Be aware that sandblasting will disqualify a project from consideration when applying for federal tax credits.

Sandblasting is never an appropriate cleaning method for historic masonry.

Painting

In general, exposed masonry should not be painted. Unless the surface was painted from the beginning, as was sometimes the case with very soft brick, cleaning and tuckpointing of the masonry is usually preferable. A previously painted surface should be chemically cleaned. Only if chemical paint removal proves impracticable (due to a cementitious paint coat, for example) should previously painted brick or stone be repainted.

Some buildings in the downtowns are constructed of soft brick. When reviewing the application of new paint over a soft brick exterior, the city, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office, should determine if such an application will benefit or hinder the preservation of the structure under review.

References

The following publications contain more detailed information about masonry.

Preservation Brief #1—The Cleaning and Waterproof Coating of Masonry Buildings

Preservation Brief #2—Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Brick Buildings

Preservation Brief #6—Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings

Preservation Brief #38—Removing Graffiti from Historic Masonry

Introduction to Early American Masonry: Stone, Brick, Mortar, and Plaster by Harley J. McKee, FAIA., National Trust/Columbia University Series on the Technology of Early American Buildings Vol I. New York

Masonry: How to Care for Old and Historic Brick and Stone by Mark London, Preservation Press, Washington D.C.

All *Preservation Briefs* are from the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, Heritage Preservation Services—and are available at the Wahpeton Planning Office—or online at:
www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm

Wood

One of the most popular building materials in the downtown is wood, due to its structural flexibility, economy, and strength. Storefronts, cornices, brackets, and other decorative facade elements were often made of wood. These original exterior woodwork elements should be retained wherever possible. Regular maintenance will prevent deterioration.

Check periodically for soft, rotted areas, splits, dampness, and pest infestation. Damaged or decayed sections can usually be repaired by renailing, caulking, and filling. Epoxy pastes and epoxy consolidants can also be very effective in repairing even seriously rotted wood. DO NOT caulk under individual siding boards or window sills - this action seals the building too tightly and does not allow the building to 'breathe.'

Keep all surfaces primed and painted to prevent wood deterioration from moisture. If a new coat of paint is necessary, it is vitally important to clean the wood before any work is done. Remove dirt with household detergent and water to allow new paint to adhere to the wood. Hand scraping and sanding is recommended for removing damaged and deteriorated paint. Only in extreme cases should all paint down to the bare wood be removed, such as where the paint has blistered and peeled. Use electrical hot air guns on decorative wood features and electric heat plates on flat wood surfaces when additional paint removal is required. Chemical strippers may be used to aid in the cleaning process - be certain to follow directions to thoroughly neutralize the chemicals after use; otherwise, new paint will not adhere to the surface. When painting, use an oil-based primer followed by two final coats of oil-based paint.

Severely rotted or missing pieces may be reproduced by a good carpenter or millwork shop. Try to match or at least complement the existing details when replacing woodwork. It is a good idea to remove vegetation that grows too closely to wood.

References

The following publications contain more detailed information about wood.

Preservation Brief #10—Exterior Paint and Problems on Historic Woodwork

Respectful Rehabilitation-Answers to Your Questions About Old Buildings by the Preservation Press, Washington D.C.

Metals

Cast iron, bronze, brass, copper, and sheet metal are used in ornamental and practical roles in the downtown's historic buildings. Intricate detail was reproduced in cast iron or stamped sheet metal as an architectural ornament at low cost, while practical hardware such as fences, gutters, down spouts, structural supports and roofing were done in metal as well. The decorative or utilitarian components in metal give buildings their human scale and liveliness.

These architectural elements are essential to the character and appearance of your building. They should not be removed unless absolutely necessary.

Cast iron was used extensively for storefront columns and window lintels and is quite permanent. A sound paint coat is essential to prevent rust and corrosion. Rust or paint buildup may be removed by chemical treatment or low pressure dry grit blasting (80-100 psi). If parts are missing, they can be reproduced in fiberglass or aluminum using existing pieces to make a mold. If the missing pieces are relatively free of ornamental detail, wooden pieces might be substituted.

Pressed or stamped sheet metal was most often used to create the sometimes very elaborate cornices that crowned many 19th-century commercial buildings. This thin metal cornice was typically nailed to a wooden framework attached to the building.

Stamped metal ornamentation may be composed of sheet copper, which requires no surface protection, or of sheet iron, usually coated with zinc or lead to retard rusting. Galvanized or lead-coated sheet metal should always be kept painted. If stamped metal is to be cleaned, a chemical paint remover should be used. Dry grit blasting, while usually safe for cast iron, should never be used on the thinner, more flexible pressed metal.

Reproductions of missing pressed metal ornaments can often be made by a sheet metal shop. In some cases, pressed metal decorative items, stamped in the original molds, are available commercially.

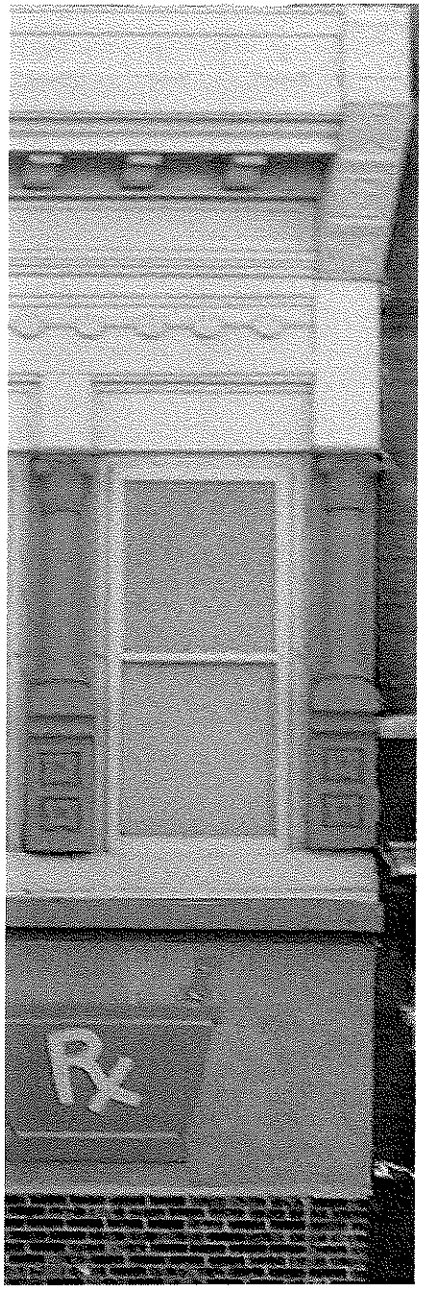
All metals requiring painting should first be primed with a commercial metal primer, followed by two finish coats of oil-based paint.

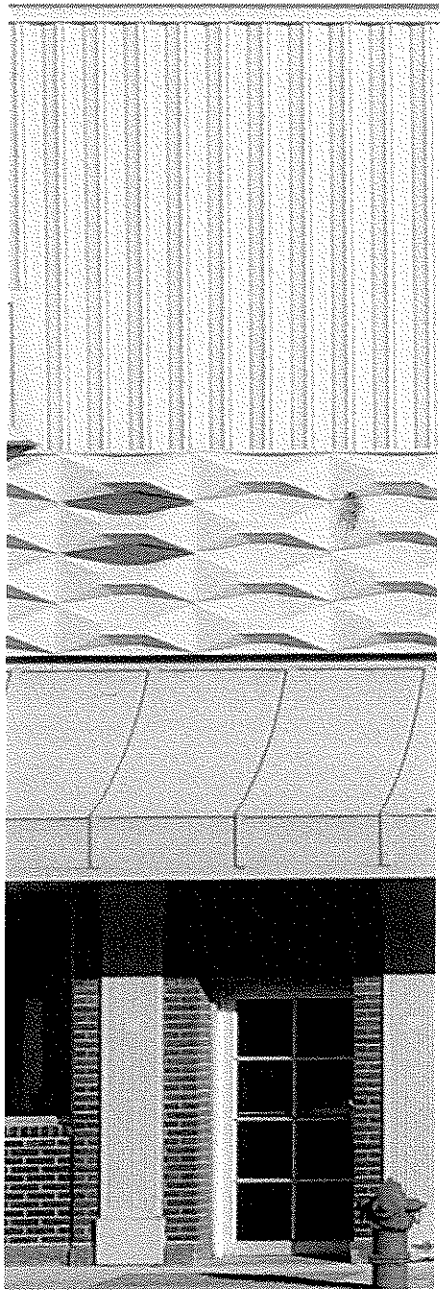
References

The following publications contain more detailed information about metals.

Preservation Brief #13—The Repair and Thermal Upgrading of Historic Steel Windows

Metals in America's Historic Buildings: Uses and Preservation Treatments by Margot Gayle, David W. Look, AIA, and John G. Waite, Government Printing Office, Washington D.C.





Other Materials

Some buildings in downtown Wahpeton and Breckenridge have been covered with other materials to modernize their appearance or limit the necessity for maintenance. Aluminum siding and artificial stone are common examples. The materials often obscure important details or cause them to be removed, such as cornices, window trim, or the storefront as a whole. They frequently can cause or intensify internal structural problems, and they reduce the visual interest of a complex wall surface.

The loss of original detail is the most obvious problem encountered with synthetic sidings. An impervious layer of siding can allow serious decay or insect damage to go unseen and unchecked as well. Moisture from condensation or interior water vapor can rot wooden materials or damage masonry in the wall. The energy savings and maintenance cost effectiveness of aluminum and artificial stone are also subject to question. Synthetic sidings by themselves provide very little insulation, and the ongoing maintenance and painting required after the surface has begun to degrade can be costly.

Synthetic siding should not be applied to buildings in historic downtowns. Wherever possible, such materials should be removed in the course of maintenance and improvements to properties.

References

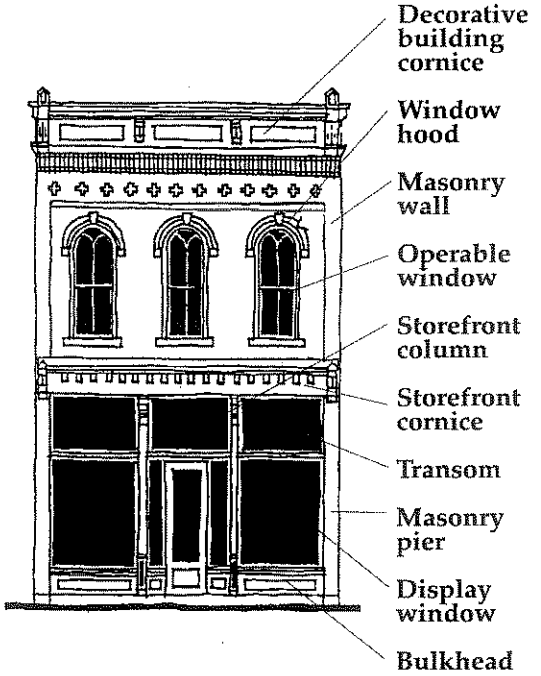
The following publication contains more detailed information about substitute siding materials.

Preservation Brief #8—Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings

General Storefront Design Considerations

Whether restoring a storefront or considering a more contemporary treatment, your plan should be based on a traditional storefront design. One characteristic of the traditional commercial facade is a well-defined frame for the storefront. This area is bounded by a pilaster or pier on either side, the sidewalk below and the storefront cornice above. It is important to contain the storefront within this frame. When the storefront is allowed to extend beyond its frame, it may no longer appear as an integral part of the overall facade design; rather, it may appear tacked on. Look at historic photographs of your building or of similar buildings to learn the original configuration of your storefront.

Following are several ideas to consider when planning your storefront renovation. Each originates in the design of the traditional storefront; however, they are not solely historical concepts. They represent sound design principles aimed at enhancing both appearance and accessibility.



Contain the storefront

A storefront should be designed to fit within the original facade opening and not extend beyond it. The storefront might be set back slightly (perhaps 3 inches) from the plane of the facade to accentuate this sense of containment.

Transparency

Large display windows were a prominent feature of the traditional storefront. As a design element, they are integral to the overall proportioning of the facade. Functionally, the large glass area provides maximum light and display area, while visually opening the facade to the street. As a rule, the storefront should be composed primarily of glass, while the upper facade should be more solid and contained with smaller, evenly spaced windows.

Appropriate materials

The color and texture of the storefront materials should be simple and unobtrusive: (1) The storefront frame can be wood, cast iron, or aluminum with a baked enamel finish; (2) the display windows should be clear glass; (3) transom windows may be clear, prism, or stained glass; (4) the entrance door should have a large glass panel and can be made of wood, painted steel, or aluminum with a baked enamel finish; (5) the base panels (bulkheads) can be of wood, polished stone, glass, tile, or pre-finished or painted aluminum-clad plywood panels; (6) the storefront cornice can be made of wood, cast iron, or sheet metal, or appropriate prefabricated painted components, or sometimes the horizontal supporting beam can serve as the storefront cap; (7) the side piers should be of the same material as the upper facade.

Inappropriate materials

Certain materials and design elements should never be used on a traditional commercial building. A mansard roof with wooden shingles, rough textured wood siding, metal siding, fake bricks or stone, and gravel aggregate materials are not appropriate. Inappropriate historical themes should also be avoided. Small window panes, a colonial door, and storefront shutters are 18th-century elements that do not belong on most 19th- or 20th-century facades.

Simplicity

Whether you are renovating an existing storefront or designing a new one, remember that the emphasis should be on transparency. The fundamental design should include large display windows with thin framing members, a recessed entrance, a cornice or a horizontal sign panel above the storefront to separate it visually from the upper facade, and low base panels to protect the windows and define the entrance.

This same basic arrangement will be equally appropriate whether constructed using traditional or modern materials.

Note the large, oversized display windows, the bulkhead below and the retractable, canvas awning above.

Doors, Windows, and Awnings

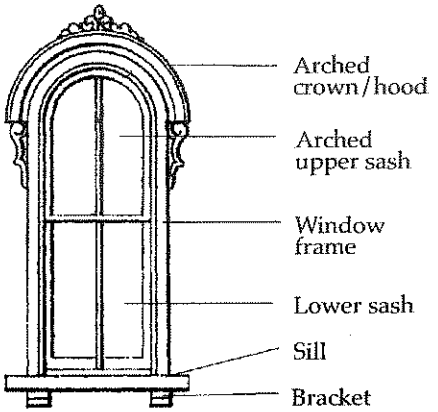
Doors and windows help to define the architecture of the historic downtowns. The upper story windows establish a rhythm in the streetscape that ties the facades together. The storefront with its large glass area opens the business to the street, inviting pedestrians to look and possibly come inside. Most doors in the downtowns were wood frame with a large glass area to match the openness of the storefront as a whole.

Doors and windows should be carefully maintained and repaired. Always retain original doors and windows if at all possible. Replacement of elements should duplicate the original form of the material closely. The original size and spacing of window muntins dividing the sash are particularly important. The size and division of window sashes should be appropriate to each building's style. Hardware is often a troublesome repair problem. Window and door hardware which reproduces turn-of-the-century forms is now readily available. Inoperable decorative metal or plastic shutters are inappropriate for use in the downtown. On buildings that originally featured shutters, make sure the panels exactly match the size and shape of the window opening.

Original storefront doors were typically recessed, constructed of wood with a large window above a single or double panel that complemented the bulkhead design below the display windows

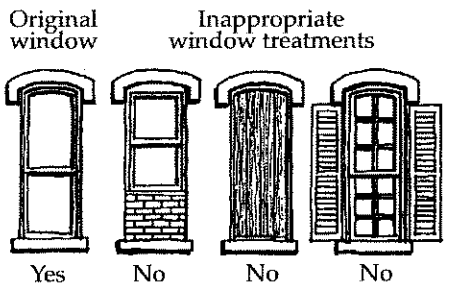
Storefront entry doors

Storefront entry doors should present an attractive appearance and should be visually appropriate for your storefront. Original doors should be retained if possible. If a new door is to be installed it should closely resemble the design and proportions of the original door. Wood is the preferred material, but steel or aluminum with a baked enamel finish may also be used. Colonial era style doors, unpainted aluminum doors and other very decorative door designs should be avoided.



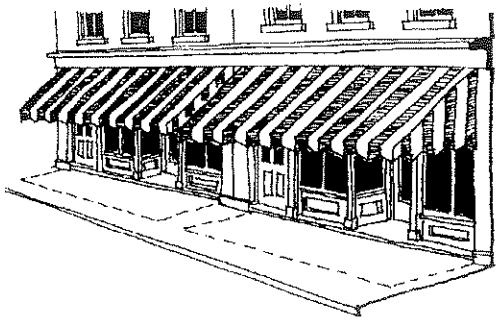
Replacement windows

When more energy efficient double-glazed aluminum or wood windows are to be used as replacements, they should match the original wood windows in size and style. Never replace a multi-pane window with a single large pane of glass. Aluminum windows should be in a baked enamel finish rather than the color of clear unfinished aluminum.



Storm windows

Storm windows may be desirable on upper story windows for energy conservation. An exterior storm window can also serve to protect and upgrade older wooden sashes. They should conform with the size and shape of the existing sash and be painted to match as well. Interior storm windows are a good choice where original windows might be obscured by the addition of exterior storm sash.



Awnings

Canvas awnings were a familiar feature of 19th-century storefronts. Apart from their primary function of sun and glare protection, they also offer shelter to pedestrians and can be an attractive feature to the storefront. Additionally, the valance can serve as a sign panel for your business. Naturally, if your building faces north, they will be of lesser practical benefit.

Select awnings that closely follow historical precedents in shape and design. Awning sizes and mounting height should be based on the original storefront design, and be operable, unless evidence of a building's original awning suggests otherwise. Always fit the awning within the storefront opening. Awnings should never extend continuously across several storefronts. Choose a water-repellent canvas or vinyl-coated canvas material; aluminum awnings or canopies are generally inappropriate. A wide variety of canvas colors are available, and you should pay special attention to choosing a color or color combination that coordinates with your building and its surroundings.

To be historically appropriate, and to allow ample clearance above the sidewalk areas, awnings may need to cover or conceal decorative transoms containing prism glass or stained glass. The use of bubble, concave, or convex awning forms were not common to early storefront design and should be avoided. Vinyl coated fabric, fixed metal, transparent or opaque vinyl or wood awnings are inappropriate. Awnings that are backlit are not acceptable.

References

The following publications contain more detailed information about windows.

Preservation Brief #3—Conserving Energy in Historic Buildings

Preservation Brief #9—The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows

Preservation Brief #10—Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork

Preservation Brief #11—Rehabilitation of Historic Storefronts

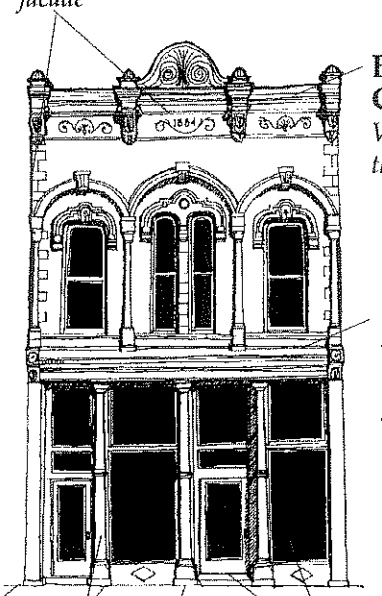
Preservation Brief #13—The Repair and Thermal Upgrading of Historic Steel Windows

Architectural Details

Architectural details are among the most distinctive elements which identify the different styles in the downtowns. Brackets, bulkheads, cornices, columns, pilasters, decorative moldings, and window hoods were used extensively to embellish buildings. These features are crucial to the historic and architectural character of the building.

Architectural details should be retained on existing structures within the historic downtown. New construction should mirror existing details, or display contemporary details that harmonize with its neighbors. It is essential that architectural detailing be carefully maintained in order to ensure its long term survival. Modern artificial siding frequently covers cornices or window trim and involves the destruction of much architectural detail. This practice is not appropriate.

Added Elements: Necessities such as electric meters and boxes, condensing units, gas meters, solar panels, air conditioners, and television antennae are contemporary features in the downtowns. They can seriously impair the visual qualities of historic architecture if improperly located. All added elements should be located on the roof or to the rear of buildings in the downtown and screened by appropriate plantings or fencing. Solar panels and television aerials should be situated as far out of public view as possible.

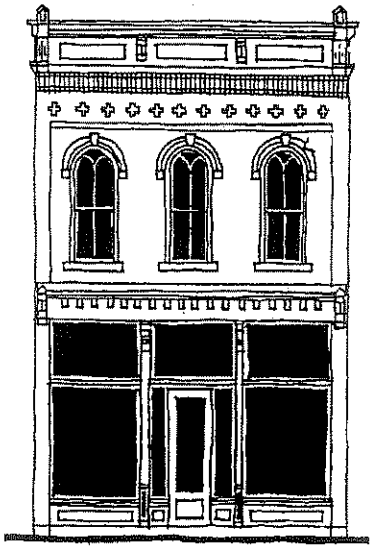


Paint Colors

Painting is the traditional method used to protect wooden and some metal and masonry buildings from the attack of moisture and other destructive environmental factors. It is more often thought of as a decorative element. Paint should provide the downtown's buildings with both a strong protective and a decorative surface layer. Oil based paints have traditionally been used on the wooden trim elements, and it is generally the best policy to continue using these paints on wood , rather than latex paints, unless careful preparations are made. Colors used originally vary with the age and style of the building. Earth tones (greens, dark reds, pale yellows and browns) were popular in the latter half of the 19th-century; lighter shades predominated in later decades. While there are no clear rules for paint colors in a stylistically mixed group of buildings like those in the two downtowns, bright or unusual colors should be avoided. Those who desire precise guidance can perform, or hire a consultant to undertake, paint analysis to determine paint colors at a specific time in a building's history.

It is strongly recommended that property owners keep their buildings regularly painted and follow these guidelines in selecting the type and color of paint. It is also recommended that the elements of a building be painted to utilize colors consistent with an integrated design for all material and color choices of the

entire exterior. Typically, trim elements that have the same function on the exterior receive same or similar colors: for example, all window and door frames are the same color, or cornices use the same or similar colors. The window sash and doors can be painted a darker color than the walls and trim. Avoid painting masonry that is not painted. Prepare the surface to be painted by removing all loose paint and sanding all rough edges that remain. Prime the surface with a high quality oil-base primer and follow with two finish coats of oil-base paint.



Paint Color Hierarchy

Minor Trim

- Window sash
- Doors
- Storefront frame
- Small details on cornices, window hoods, and bulkheads

Major Trim

- Building cornice
- Window hoods
- Window frame
- Storefront cornice
- Storefront columns
- Bulkheads

References

The following publications contain more detailed information about painting.

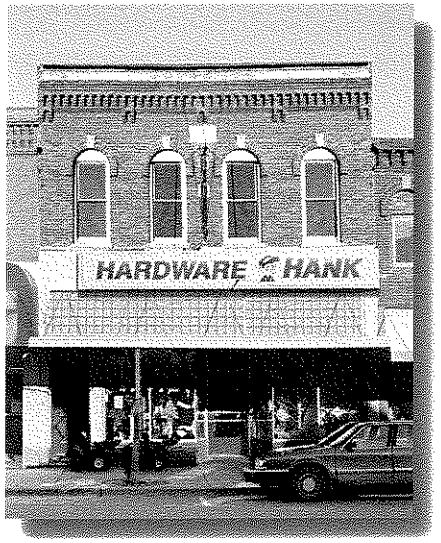
Preservation Brief #10—Exterior Paint Problems of Historic Woodwork

Paint in America : The Colors of Historic Buildings by Roger W. Moss (Editor), Preservation Press, Washington D.C.

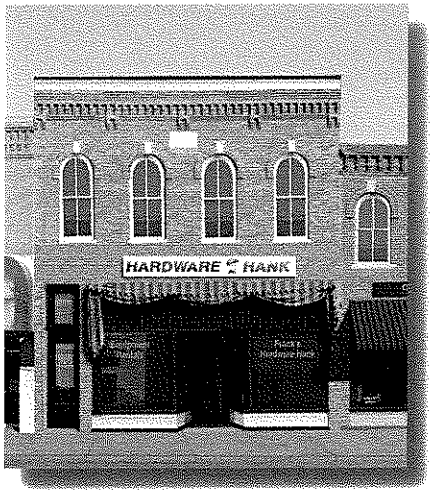
Rear Entrances

When implementing design improvements to secondary facades, property owners should be aware of the main (street) facade elements that give identity to their building or business. Any improvements should reflect the design elements associated with their building—signage, awnings, paint colors, use of materials, etc. should be coordinated on all public facades of a business. However, it should be considered that sides and backs of buildings usually have different details, window sizes, various wall heights, and different brick colors, all of which clearly indicate a distinctive character without being repeats of the front facades.

Signage and Lighting



Backlit plastic signs and underlit awnings with lettering are inappropriate for historic buildings.



Flat signboards, low-profile projecting signs, painted lettering on the display windows and awning valance are appropriate.

Signage is an essential element in any commercial district. Anonymity is clearly not good for business. Unfortunately, signage has often been one of the most disfiguring elements in the urban landscape. Visual clutter from oversized and ill-positioned signs presents a negative image for the entire street.

A business' sign is important not only as an identifier, but equally significant as an expression of an image for the business. Don't underestimate the value of quality signage. A clear message, presented with style, will encourage passersby to venture in. Money spent on quality signage is usually money well spent.

When thinking about signage, consider the following:

Size and placement

In a densely built downtown area, signage should be directed at and scaled to the pedestrian. Don't assume that the largest sign is the best. Pay particular attention to how your sign relates to your building. Look for logical signage locations on your facade.

The best location for signage is at the continuous flat wall areas above storefront display windows and below the upper level windows. Where such space is limited by the location of the storefront cornice, signage can be mounted directly on top of the cornice, even with a slight tilt downward as shown by the historic photographs for some buildings. Don't cover windows, doors, or architectural ornament. A good sign looks like it belongs where it was placed. It should be an extension of the overall design of your facade.

Message and design

A good sign is simple and direct. Don't be tempted to say too much. Choose a letter style or graphic treatment that projects your image and is clear and easy to read. Coordinate sign colors with the colors of your building. Remember that visual clutter will only dilute your message.

A good sign can take many forms. It may be painted on a flat panel, or it might have a sculptural quality. Individual letters might be applied to the facade. Logos or lettering can be painted, stenciled, or engraved on windows. Even the valance of an awning can be an excellent signboard. Sign design that brings

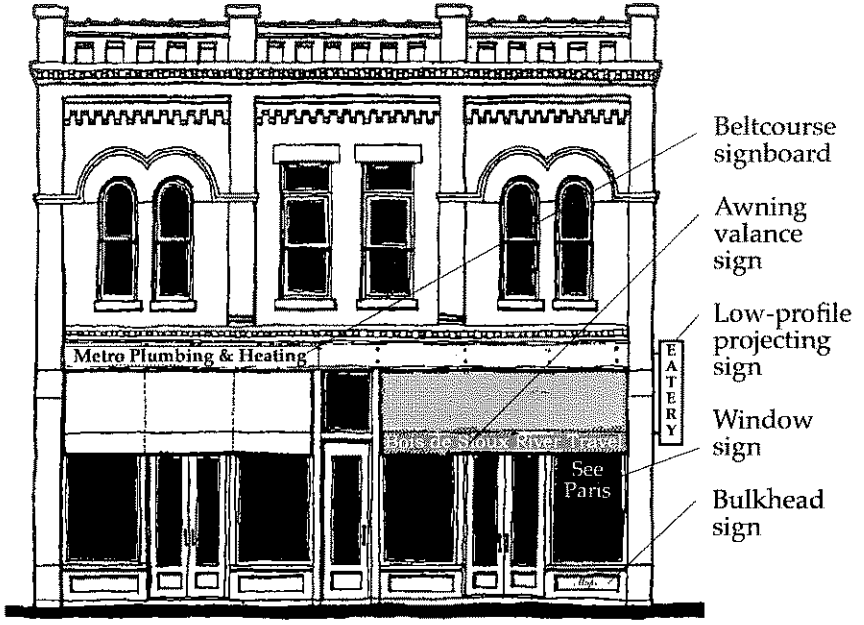
additional identity to storefront businesses, by using three-dimensional signs, symbols, or representations of the business (mortar and pestle, scales of justice, barber poles, etc.) is encouraged. Small two-sided signs that project over the sidewalk are excellent for communication for pedestrians. Neon signs inside shop windows are usually appropriate and possess a charm that can be very attractive, if not overused. Neon signage is not appropriate on the building exterior, however, unless it was an original feature of the building. Lighting for other kinds of signage should be limited to direct illumination by incandescent lamps.

Inappropriate signs

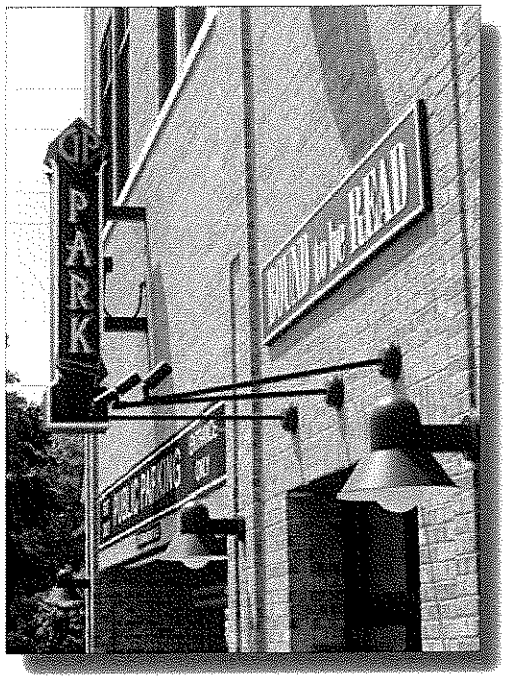
Certain sign types are generally considered inappropriate in an historic commercial district. These would include large projecting signs, rooftop signs, and internally illuminated awnings and signs. Replacement of these kinds of signs should be strongly considered in planning for rehabilitation. To address this issue, the City of Wahpeton is considering the adoption of a sign ordinance that regulates signs within the historic downtown area.

General Sign Guidelines

- Signs should be made of traditional materials such as wood or metal panels with painted or ornamental metal lettering.
- Signage should be sized appropriately and in proportion to its building.
- Signs and graphics should have colors that are coordinated with the overall building colors and the colors of the adjacent buildings.
- Signs should have a lettering type face generally of the era of the building, such as letters in a serif or script style for the earliest buildings, and with the possible use of more modern sans-serif style lettering for more recent buildings. However, each sign shall contain no more than two lettering styles, and the lettering shall not occupy more than 60 percent of the total sign area. Where businesses are required to utilize a corporate image or the sign lettering style and/or color is part of the business identity, the corporate image may be acceptable by utilizing other mitigating historic sign design features such as a raised sign boarder, dimensional letters, small lettering size and scale.
- Signage should be placed at traditional sign locations including the storefront beltcourse, upper facade walls, hanging or mounted inside windows, or projecting from the face of the building.
- Signs should not conceal any architectural features.



- Signage mounting brackets and hardware should be anchored into mortar, not masonry.
- Signs which are lit should have concealed lighting—spot or up-lit lighting for signs is recommended.
- Internally-lit or flashing signs are not appropriate for historic commercial districts.



While neon lighting is generally discouraged, if applied on a well-designed, low-profile sign, it may be permitted.

General Lighting Guidelines

- Commercial sign lighting fixtures should be simple in design or concealed.
- Concealed light fixtures or fixtures appropriate to the building's period are encouraged.
- Spot or up-lit lighting for signs is recommended.
- Light fixtures should be low profile and have minimal projection from building face.
- Lighting should not conceal any architectural features.
- The light source should not be visible from the public right-of-way.
- Incandescent illumination is the most appropriate light source for historic commercial signage.
- "Historic" theme light fixtures such as "Colonial" coach lanterns are not appropriate to the historic downtowns.
- Internally-lit plastic signs and awning are not appropriate.
- Flashing lights are not appropriate for historic commercial districts.
- Light fixture mounting brackets and hardware should be anchored into mortar, not masonry.
- Neon signage is generally not appropriate on the building exterior, unless it was an original feature of the building, has in itself become a distinguishing feature identified with the building or its use, or is of special artistic merit as a symbolic or representational sign.

New Downtown Construction

Much has been written (and argued) on the issue of new construction in historic downtowns. An exhaustive discussion of the issue could fill a book and is beyond the scope of this guide. However, the general principle to follow is that new buildings should look new.

B. Clarkson Schoettle of the Main Street Center has most succinctly summarized the other basic design considerations as follows:

Proportions of the Facade

The average height and width of the surrounding buildings determines a general set of proportions for an infill structure or the bays of a larger structure.

Composition

The composition of the infill facade (that is, the organization of its parts) should be similar to that of surrounding facades.

Rhythms that carry throughout the block (such as window spacing) should be incorporated into the new facade.

Proportions of the Openings

The size and proportion of window and door openings of an infill building should be similar to those on surrounding facades.

The same applies to the ratio of window area to solid wall for the facade as a whole.

If the site is large, the mass of the facade can be broken into a number of smaller bays, to maintain a rhythm similar to the surrounding buildings.

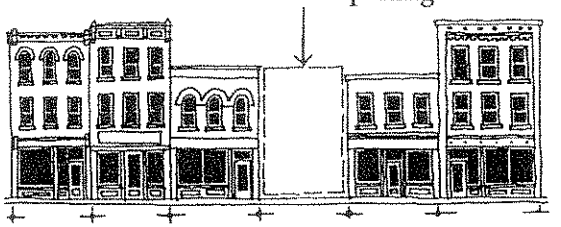
Detailing

Infill architecture should reflect some of the detailing of surrounding buildings in window shapes, cornice lines, and brick work.

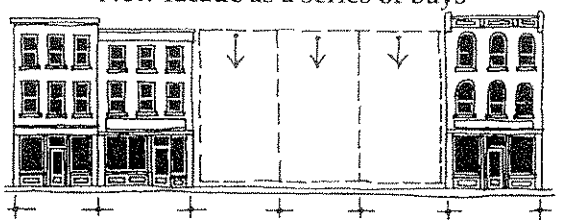
Materials

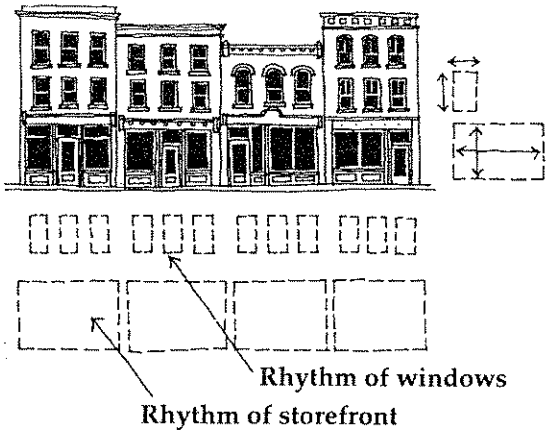
An infill facade should be composed of materials similar to adjacent facades. The new building should not stand out from the others.

New facade fills opening



New facade as a series of bays



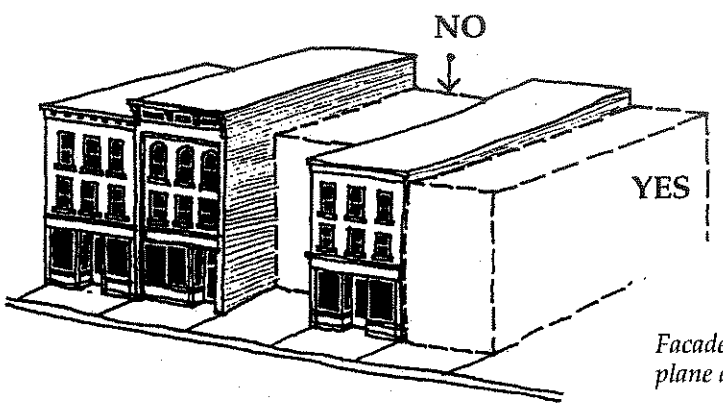


Color

Colors utilized should relate to each other in a coherent and consistent design, and also be selected in response to the existing materials and colors of surrounding buildings. Color selections for each building will include all the visible elements on the exterior, in order to achieve an integrated and coordinated design approach; and, thus it will include such elements as: the wall materials, accessory items such as flashing and hardware, all the trim components around doors, windows, at cornices and applied panels; the painted or pre-finished components such as windows and doors; and for awnings, signs and exterior lighting fixtures.

Building Setback

The new facade should be flush with its neighbors.



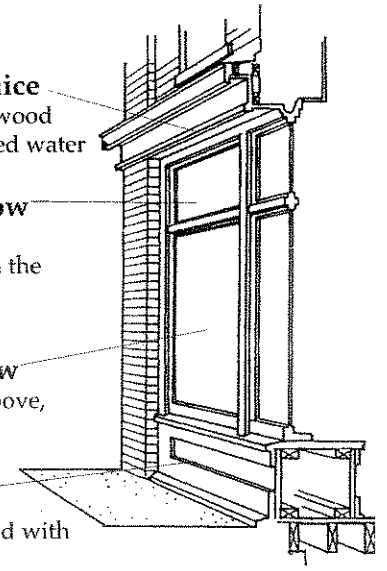
Facade is set on the same plane as the adjacent buildings

New Building Materials

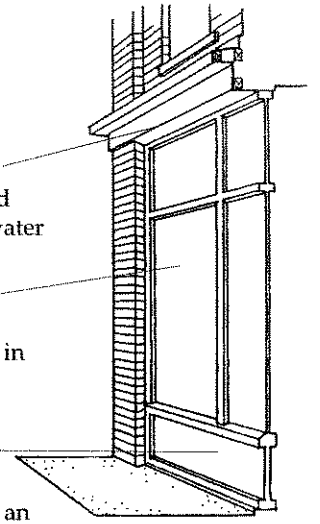
While the commercial property owner is encouraged to use traditional materials in the reconstruction of missing or altered building elements, often it is economically infeasible. Therefore, the owner may consider using newer building materials that emulate the appearance of the traditional elements.

When designing a new storefront for your commercial property, you should meet with city staff to determine what contemporary building materials are acceptable and available.

The traditional storefront is generally constructed of a combination of materials, such as wood framing, plywood moldings, metal flashing, and plate glass. The typical elements of the storefront were the metal-clad window crown or cornice, the wood framed transom window, the wood framed display window, and the wood or metal bulkhead. The window and bulkhead are generally set back in the storefront opening at least six inches.



The reconstructed storefront can create the same "look" using newer building materials such as insulating glass and aluminum framing. However, the proportions and placement of the different elements need to closely match the elements of the original storefront.*

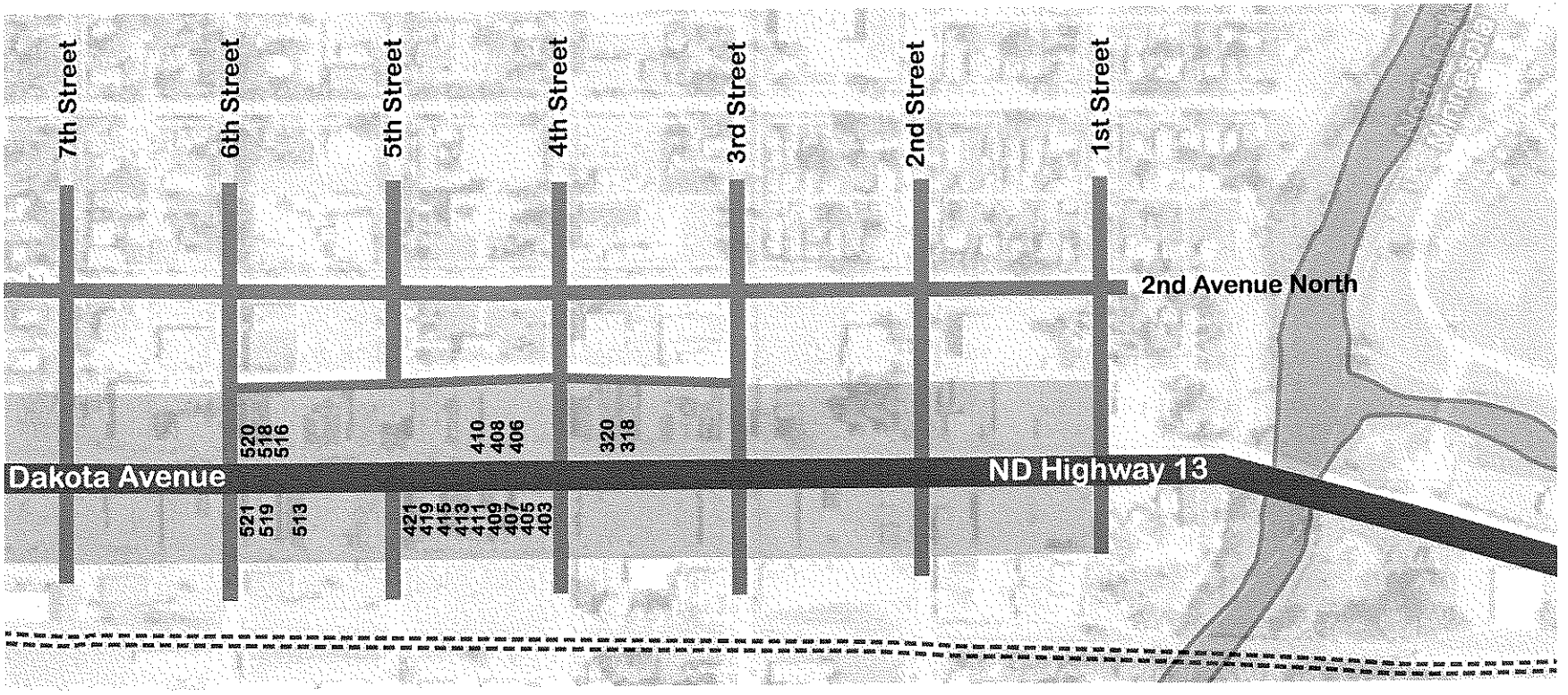


* Excerpts from *Keeping Up Appearances* from the National Trust for Historic Preservation

Applying the Guidelines to Wahpeton's Buildings

The Wahpeton Downtown Commercial District stretches along Dakota Avenue from the Bois de Sioux River on the east to 12th Street on the west. Within that area there are two buildings currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places: the old Post Office Building at 602 Dakota Avenue, and the old Wahpeton Hospital Building at 720 Dakota Avenue.

The August 2006 "Standing Structures Inventory" also identified five individual sites in the downtown area that are potentially eligible for listing on the National Register. These include: a single-family residence at 86 Dakota Avenue; the one-story brick structure at 322 Dakota, the "Swank" Building at 416 Dakota, the National Bank Building at 418 Dakota, and the Citizen's Building at 509 Dakota Avenue. An additional fourteen structures were identified in the inventory as contributing to a potential Dakota Avenue historic district, many of which are highlighted in this section of this manual. The addresses of the structures illustrated are shown below. The following examples were selected to illustrate the applications of the design guidelines. These examples display the variety of architectural styles found in Wahpeton's downtown, and can be used as a guide to what type of improvement might be appropriate for other buildings that are similar in design.



Dakota Avenue • North Side

Address	Page	Description
318	**(4W)**	This single-story brick commercial building has had its storefront somewhat altered with aluminum framed door and display windows.
320	**(6W)**	This commercial brick building has had its entire street facade obscured with a modern brick application at the pedestrian level and vertical wood siding above.
406	**(8W)**	The upper story of this 1902 brick commercial structure remains intact. However, the storefront opening has been infilled with sympathetic, but modern doors, windows, aluminum framing, and a fixed metal awning.
408	**(10W)**	Like its neighbors on either side, this handsome commercial brick structure retains integrity on the second story with its large "Romanesque" arched windows and displays a modern storefront below.
410	**(12W)**	Similar to the buildings to the east, this early 20th century brick structure's facade remains intact except for its modern storefront infill.
516	**(14W)**	This modest two story brick structure has been hidden for decades behind a modern metal screen which was removed in the spring of 2008. The upper windows have been infilled with wood panels and the storefront modifies with a stucco-like sheathing and modern windows and doors.
518	**(16W)**	Displaying architectural interest in the upper brick facade, this two-story commercial block has had its decorative cornice removed, the upper story windows "down-sized," and its storefront stripped of architectural interest with a austere, modern storefront.
520	**(18W)**	Originally built in 1892 as the Masonic Temple, this ornate brick structure once displayed a band of 5 window sets across the upper story. The only visible remains of its original storefront are embedded iron posts defining the inside corners of its two storefronts and the center entry giving access to the upper floor.

Dakota Avenue • South Side

403	**(20W)**	**Wahpeton Opera House**—Built in 1892 this handsome three story brick structure has also recently been stripped of its "decorative" metal panels. The upper story windows on Dakota Avenue have by "down-sized" with smaller windows and wood panels, and the second story arched windows have been infilled with plywood. Although the storefront has been "modernized" it retains its original configuration with a center doorway.

Address	Page	Description
405	**(22W)**	This two-story brick building retains most of its upper story integrity and the original configuration at the storefront level.
407	**(24W)**	Like its neighbor to the east, this modest brick structure maintains most of its original fenestration and storefront design.
409	**(26W)**	This brick structure, once known as the Hawes Block, once displayed a builders plaque below the cornice that read, "19 HAWES 29," noting a completion date of 1929. The decorative cornice is now removed along with the plaque and the signboard/transom area, between the first and second floor is now obscured by a panel that stretches across 5 buildings and reads JCPenneys.
411	**(28W)**	Constructed in 1954, this single story brick structure is mostly hidden by the panelled signage above its storefront.
413	**(30W)**	**The Schuler Block**—Built in 1897 this highly refined Romanesque Revival commercial buildings displays graceful architectural detailing on the upper story. The structure has lost its second story fenestration, and like its adjacent buildings its integrity is severely compromised by the commercial signage and banding and signage.
415	**(32W)**	This single story brick building was constructed in 1922. The first floor facade was remodeled ca. 1992 in order to coordinate the design of five contiguous storefronts for one tenant.
419	**(34W)**	**The Pfister Building**—This 1936 structure is one of Wahpeton's only Art Deco structures with its "moderne" curving facade made of reflective and polished materials. The beauty of this building is also obscured with the commercial branding.
421	**(36W)**	This cream brick building retains its second story brick detailing, while the pedestrian lever has been modified with modern aluminum framing, doors and windows.
513	(38W)	This light brick two story structure has had its upper windows either removed and infilled with paneling or downsized. The first floor storefront, like most of its neighbors, has been "updated" with a newer window and door configuration and materials.
519	**(40W)**	The upper story windows of this simple brick facade have been infilled with a matching brick but a nearly white mortar calling undue attention to the unsympathetic modification. The buildings integrity is also compromised by the signboard banding that extends across both this building and its neighbor to the west.
521	**(42W)**	This mid-20th century building, like its neighbor to the east, has its upper story windows infilled with brick. It shares its signboard with the adjacent structure.