



Grand Avenue Commercial Historic District Design Guidelines

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Acknowledgments

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At the onset of the development of these Design Guidelines, a survey of community perception captured the top timeless attributes of Spencer's downtown Historic District. It is these attributes that the Design Guidelines aim to enhance and protect.

Guideline Goals

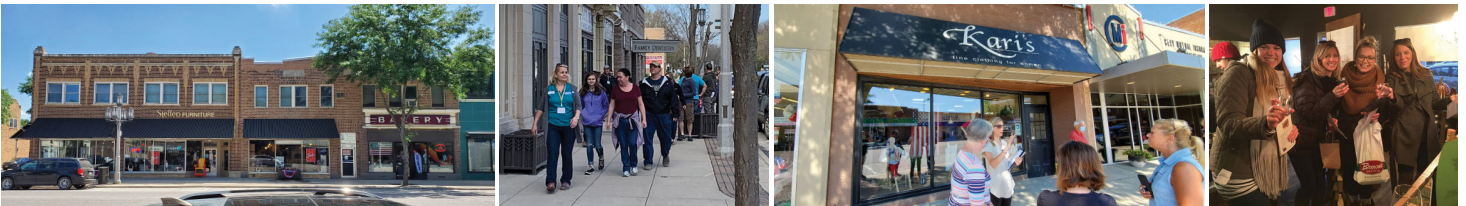
WHY do the guidelines exist?

This guideline document was created to merge the goals of many priorities within Spencer. Economic growth and historically mindful rehabilitations go hand in hand. You can look to the future while honoring the past. They are not opposing forces. When aligned, the individual efforts of property owners, designers, and city officials can have profoundly positive and measurable impacts on downtown viability. Guidelines aim to:

- Approach property potential from a holistic and long-term viewpoint
- Serve as a tool to enhance and protect property values
- Educate property owners on the connection between historic fabric and their bottom line
- Create awareness in the community around the importance of architectural heritage and how they can partner with the government or other agencies for win/win solutions.

In contrast, becoming too complacent with an 'anything goes' approach to downtown building projects is detrimental. Property values degrade, tenants seek out more suitable areas, and consumers and visitors choose to go elsewhere. Additionally, property owners may relinquish access to rehabilitation-focused funding if their projects are not mindful of maintaining historic character.

At the core of these guidelines is a realization that people are drawn to places with unique charm and character. So protecting and enhancing the assets of individual buildings will have the collective impact of drawing people and business to your downtown. Work purposefully to maintain your downtown's relevancy and your building's integrity!



WHO do the guidelines serve?

- Building owners, potential building owners
- Business owners and entrepreneurs
- Developers, investors, and real estate agents
- Contractors, architects, and designers
- Volunteers interested in historic preservation
- The City of Spencer and government officials
- The Historic Preservation Commission
- Volunteer board members
- Public art or community advancement volunteers
- Economic development professionals
- Tourism related professionals and volunteers

HOW will this document be used?

This document acts as a starting point for awareness, providing additional resource tracks depending on specific needs. As a start, skim through the table of contents to become familiar with the range of information within. It may be helpful now or in the future. Dive deeper into recommendations before tackling a building project within the historic district. The guidelines will be distributed with friendly and helpful assistance by the City and other community entities. The Planning Department is a point of contact for further questions. Reach them at 712.580.7200 or www.spenceriowacity.com

What's in a District?



A **historic district** is a section of a city deemed historically and/or architecturally valuable. Historic districts contain older buildings, often because they are some of the original structures of a developing area or remnants of an important part of the city's history. Declaring a historic district requires submission and approval of its significance by a governing entity.

A **period of significance** (a measured period of historical time) must be declared, and an actual district boundary is established. Within this boundary, the aim is to fortify awareness and preservation of architectural assets from the period of significance. Preservation is often incentivized while contemporary aesthetic changes or additions to buildings is discouraged in an effort to protect the District's historical integrity and value as a community asset.

Spencer's Grand Avenue Commercial Historic District was established in 2004. The period of significance is 1913 - 1935, with **areas of significance** declared as Commerce, Community Planning & Development, and Architecture. Born from the great fire of 1931, and the unprecedented efforts of redevelopment that followed, much of the historical legacy and architectural identity of the District was created at this time and for this reason. A hyper-focused effort within a relatively short period of time set forth the rebirth of the downtown. The styles, attitudes, and practices of this time period left a unique stamp on the downtown which persists today.

Within the District, these buildings act as a set backdrop to the daily life, commerce, and tourism being played

out downtown. Continually, it is Spencer's charge to protect this backdrop, as it is unique and never has and never will exist anywhere else. The story is Spencer's to protect, pass down, and carry on.

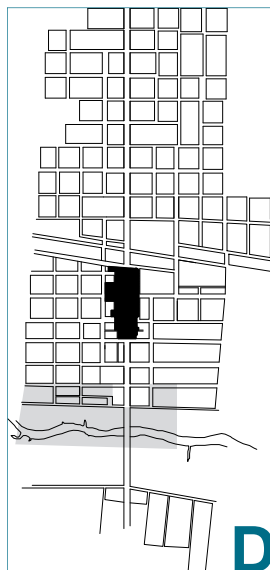
As a general rule of thumb, buildings (or parts of buildings) more than 50 years old are considered **historic fabric**. Historic fabric can consist of a variety of items:

- Building setting or context, or its shape or form
- Building or surface materials and finishes
- Roofs, ceilings, walls, and flooring
- Openings including doors and windows
- Exposed structure
- Trim, ornamentation, and craft details
- Interior features and built-ins

If enough historic fabric exists on a building which applies to the period of significance, it is considered **contributing**. Designation of a contributing building may qualify the property for certain rehabilitation funding. This is just one of the many reasons to heed the advice of these **design guidelines** to maintain the historic integrity of your building. If a building does not have traits which apply to the period of significance, or has lost traits due to extensive updates, then it is considered

non-contributing. However, even non-contributing buildings fall within the District boundary, and obviously have a major impact on the collective appearance of downtown. Design guidelines aim to educate and guide mindful rehabilitation of all structures within the District, regardless of their "official" status.

What's in a District?



- A. *Central Business District*
- B. *Main Street District*
- C. *Cultural District*
- D. *Riverfront District*
- E. *North Grand Avenue Residential Historic District*

**Surrounding
Districts**



**Grand Avenue
Commercial Historic District**

District Property Listing

Address	Buidling Name	Year
12-18 W 5th St	Four Front Commercial Building	1935
13 W 4th St	Commercial Building	1931
10 W 4th St	Medlar Building	1921
15-19 W 4th St	Heikens/Glasgow Building	1916
21 W 5th St	U.S. Post Office	1932
301-305 Grand	Union Block	1917
307 Grand	Commercial Building	1917
310 Grand	Commercial Building	1930
312 Grand	Commercial Building	1922
315 Grand	Woodcock Building	1931
316 Grand	Commercial Building	1931
318 Grand	Commercial Building	c 1890
319 Grand	Hastings Building	1919
320 Grand	Commercial Building	c 1915
323 Grand	Farmer's Trust & Savings Bank	1916
400-404 Grand	Flint-Cummings Rasmussen Building	1932
401-405 Grand	McAllister Block	1932
406-408 Grand	Fraser Theater	1932
407 Grand	C.C. National Bank	1932
409 Grand	Cole Block	1932
410 Grand	Floete/Thomas Building	1932
413-415 Grand	I.O.O.F Building	1895



323 Grand Ave

Address	Buidling Name	Year
416-418 Grand	Smith/Knight Building	1932
417 Grand	T.H. Jones & Sons	c 1895
419 Grand	Leach/Thompson Building	1908
420 Grand	Redfield Building	1932
421 Grand	Gilder-Krause Building	1913
423 Grand	Haygarth Building	1916
500 Grand	Moore Building*	1932
501 Grand	Citizen's National Bank	1892
504 Grand	Solon (Spencer) Theater	1932
505 Grand	Moore & Birdsall Building	1922
508 Grand	Floete/Cornwall Building	1932
509 Grand	J.L. Frank Building	1922
510 Grand	Asher Arcade Building	1928/32
511 Grand	Wilsey Building	1919
514 Grand	Clemons/Shaffer Building	1932
520 Grand	F. G. Floete Building	1932
521 Grand	F. W. Knight Building	1914
524 Grand	Peter Ostrom Building	1932
525 Grand	The Reporter Building	1913
526 Grand	Hurd Building	1915
528 Grand	Poole Building	1923
600 Grand	Asher/Smith Building	1928/30
605 Grand	Hotel Tangney	1921

[Bold indicates contributing architectural resources.]



605 Grand Ave

A Brief History Lesson

The town of Spencer was incorporated in 1880, after some of the first European settlers arrived in the original Spencer's Grove area in 1866.

Following the establishment of the railroad in Clay County, the arrival of settlers from the British Isles and northern Europe shaped the foundation of the region's character, dwellings, and the first types of businesses and shops to be established. A small business district emerged near the original train depot at W 7th Street and 1st Ave W and grew along what was then Main Street (now Grand Avenue). Spencer's downtown continued to grow throughout the turn of the century extending from the rail lines north down to the Little Sioux River to the south and included a diverse array of businesses, civic buildings, and social establishments.

On a fateful day in June 1931, a child handling a sparkler accidentally lit ablaze an entire firework display inside the Otto A. Bjornstad Drug Store on the corner of 4th & Main. The resulting disastrous fire ultimately caused the destruction of over 50 stores and partial or total damage to nearly 100 downtown buildings. The town's telephone exchange resided directly above the drug store, resulting in loss of communication and further mayhem. The fire spread to both sides of the street and was so immense in scale that the very pavement of what is now Grand Avenue melted and burned. A total of nine surrounding fire departments contributed to the effort, with the blaze finally extinguished after a Des Moines Register airplane brought dynamite used to destroy buildings in order to stop the fire's spread.

With the timing of the fire during the early years of the Great Depression, the sheer scale of the impact of the event could have negatively affected the viability and growth of the town of 5,000. But amazingly, within 12 months all buildings would be reconstructed. Buildings of brick and stone replaced the original pioneer and wooden structures lost in the fire. A palpable race to be the first business to rebuild and reopen ensued. The result was an intense concentration of design and construction of a large swath of downtown in a short period of time. The style and scale of these new structures, built collectively, propelled downtown Spencer into modernity in a swift, impactful time

- 1866** First settlers arrive in Spencer's Grove area
- 1871** Spencer voted as county seat and platted
First shops, school, and hotel are established
- 1878** Railroad is established through town
- 1879** First Clay County Agricultural Society fair event held
- 1880** Town of Spencer incorporated
- 1890** The Spencer Improvement Club (later Chamber of Commerce) established
- 1931** Great Fire originating from firework display causes mass destruction downtown
- 1932** Most of downtown rebuilt, a massive planning effort, with strong Spanish/Mission influence as well as other styles of the time
- 1937** As a result of the Spencer fire, Iowa State legislature passes law banning sale of fireworks statewide which stood until 2017
- 2021** Spencer celebrates its sesquicentennial!



Spencer's original downtown, circa 1918



A scene from the Great 1931 Spencer fire

A Brief History Lesson

period that would have under normal developmental circumstances taken a decade or more. For downtown Spencer, its identity was reborn and it is this signature resulting character that the use of Design Guidelines aims to protect and enhance.

In the decade following the fire, Spencer did not shrink as some living in the region suspected but in fact grew by 1,500 residents. A time of continued prosperity for the downtown began and would peak following the second World War.

‘An aggressive, friendly atmosphere prevails in Spencer.’

Excerpt from the 1984 volume of Clay County History

The essential uniqueness of the Commercial Historic District, born from the ashes and perseverance of its citizens during the 1931 fire and other hard times, is a story which belongs to Spencer alone. It is told through brick and mortar, through the people and businesses who have lived and are living within these buildings.

Spencer continues to serve as a regional hub, with rail, truck, and freight/mail air service. While it can sometimes feel like the bustle of transportation services are at odds with a quaint downtown, these constant connections to people and goods help to maintain the relevancy of Spencer’s downtown to a broader region. U.S. Hwys 18 & 71 slice through the downtown district, providing the blessing and curse of bustling truck and through-traffic. The speed and volume of traffic does indeed pose unique challenges to the downtown. But the alternative is perhaps worse, as demonstrated time and again in small towns that deflate once a major circulation artery is rerouted to the edge of town or bypasses it all together.

People and industry continue to have reason to be in downtown and its citizens and agencies have worked hard to keep businesses going, keep storefronts filled, and collectively place priority on maintaining a clean, safe, and vibrant downtown. For the long-term health of the District and all the businesses and people within, it is paramount that these reasons to be downtown continue to be cultivated.



Citizens enjoying downtown Spencer, then and now

RECOMMENDED READING

Conflagration: The Great Spencer Fire of 1931 by Julie Schmidt

A fascinating, concise read with plenty of historic pictures recounting the events and aftermath of the Spencer fire. Available for purchase at Arts on Grand or Clay County Heritage Center. Available to check out at the Spencer Public Library.

Grand Avenue Historic Commercial District Nomination Listed 2004, prepared by Molly Myers Naumann

This document includes more detailed information of interest regarding the significance of the District’s formation and influences. The document is extensive, but composed of smaller, easily digested parts. A top notch resource for anyone interested in history, architecture, and community planning in Spencer.

Spencer's Architectural Style

The Period of Significance which defines The Grand Avenue Commercial Historic District spans 1913 - 1935. **So what does that actually mean?** It means the buildings constructed during this time frame define the signature character of downtown Spencer. If enough of this character is preserved and enhanced, it will continue to have an impactful presence. If too much of the character from this period is lost or altered, then the entire district becomes less 'Spencer-ish' and more 'Anywhere, U.S.A.' There is not just one architectural style which defines Grand Avenue's Period of Significance. Particularly, Spanish Revival and Art Deco styles were popular in the 30s, and these influences can be seen in an assortment of buildings throughout the district that were built after the fire. Signage, light fixtures, hardware, and interior detailing also contribute to the district.

1840s - 1880s

ITALIANATE

A common mid-19th century style. Commercial Italianate architecture can be characterized by tall narrow windows, often with ornamental pediments or rounded tops. Building cornices with heavy brick detail including dentils and brackets. The facades are often symmetrical.



1890s - 1920s

COMMERCIAL or CHICAGO STYLE

A category that typically includes commercial buildings ranging from one to four stories tall. Commonly brick, with large main floor storefront windows and double hung or Chicago windows on the upper floors. Modest cornices can be found usually of brick with a stone cap. The name of the original building owner might be found in a stone panel near the cornice.



1890 - 1930s

RENAISSANCE REVIVAL

Renaissance Revival commonly incorporates details from past styles such as Palladian windows, quoin detailing at corners, or other brick patterning. Buildings of this style are often symmetrical with a centrally located door. Entrances are often highlighted with additional decoration, and may include a complementary material such as stone. Upper floors tend to be more "simple" than the main/ground floor.



1895 - 1950

CLASSICAL REVIVAL or NEOCLASSICAL

An extremely common architectural style across the United States used for banking, government, and religious buildings. Full height columns topped with Corinthian, Ionic, or Doric capitals and a formal pediment clearly define the neoclassical style. Symmetry is strong, and materials are commonly stone as opposed to brick.



Spencer's Architectural Style

1890 - 1930

SULLIVANESQUE

This turn of the century style was created by Louis Sullivan while working in Chicago. His goal was to supplement the strong, tall design of skyscrapers with ornamentation. Delicate details are quintessential Sullivan, and they're often glazed terra cotta forms that introduce organic elements to otherwise rigid architectural forms.



1915 - 1940

SPANISH COLONIAL REVIVAL or SPANISH ECLECTIC

The Spanish eclectic style was at its height from 1915-1940, popularized at the Panama California Exposition of 1915. Clay tile roofs, arched entry ways, and smooth walls (stucco or tile) exemplify this style. This revival often also includes details from Gothic and Renaissance designs.



1925 - 1940

ART DECO

Beginning after World War I, sharp edged aesthetics and geometrical details are two prominent elements that define the art deco style. Sleek lines, stepped elements, and smooth building finishes were also common. Considered the first "American" style to look forward, rather than back. Part of the Modern Movement, it is related to the Art Moderne style – which is even more sleek.



1930 - 1950

MODERNE

The Moderne Style made a brief impact on architectural style in the United States. It followed the Art Deco style with less detail and even smoother surfaces. Its goal was to be free from influences of the past and took inspiration from industrial design. The even more stark International Style quickly eclipsed the Moderne aesthetic.



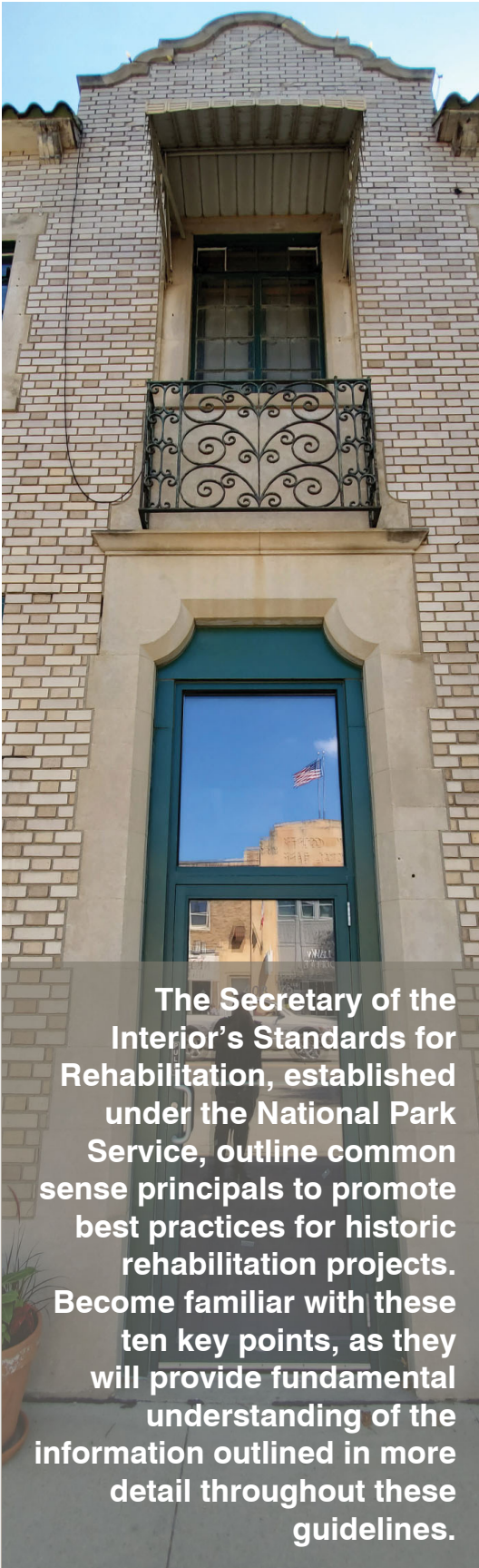
1940s - 1960s

MID-CENTURY MODERN

A "newer" style of architecture, it is often given a date range of late 1940s to the 1960s. The era was heavily influenced by industrial design and mass manufacturing. Details are often simple and minimal, and new materials for exterior cladding became popular ways of modernizing existing buildings. Facades are often balanced asymmetrically.



Standards for Rehabilitation



The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, established under the National Park Service, outline common sense principals to promote best practices for historic rehabilitation projects. Become familiar with these ten key points, as they will provide fundamental understanding of the information outlined in more detail throughout these guidelines.

1

A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

2

The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

3

Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

4

Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

5

Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.

Standards for Rehabilitation



6

Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and material if possible. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

7

Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

8

Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

9

New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

10

New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Types of Building Projects

Let's talk about construction projects. Depending on your building, there may be different terminology and approaches to the work you do. In general, strive to carry out changes to your building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation on previous pages 12-13. All buildings within the Historic District should be mindful of projects that act in accordance with, rather than at odds with, the Standards.



ENCOURAGED APPROACHES

PRESERVATION Focuses on the maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of a property's form as it has evolved over time.

REHABILITATION Acknowledges the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the property's historic character.

RESTORATION Depicts a property at a particular period of time in its history, while removing evidence of other periods.

RECONSTRUCTION Re-creates vanished or non-surviving portions of a property for interpretive purposes.

DISCOURAGED APPROACHES

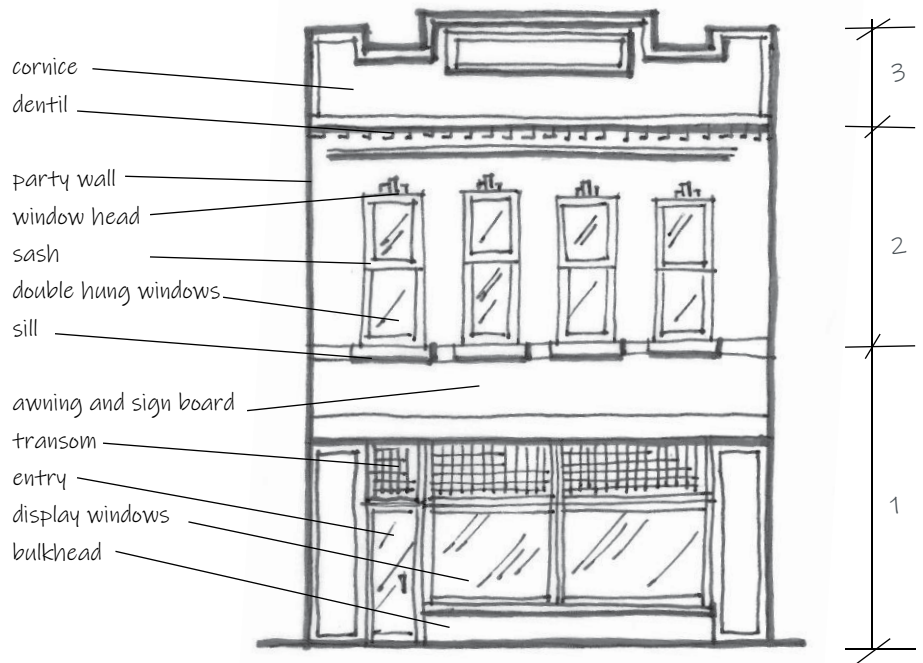
REMODEL / ALTERATION The process of actively and purposefully changing a property without regard to its original architectural style, details, or characteristics.



Get Your Building Bearings

facade components

Spencer's Historic District buildings display many of the classic elements of downtown commercial property. Most buildings are one or two stories and have housed a variety of tenants over the years. Some upper floors may currently be unoccupied, but it is vastly important to maintain roofs and upper windows in order to stabilize even usable first floor space. Organized down four lane Grand Avenue, the downtown offers broad views of the District at once. For this reason, it can't be stressed enough that the condition of each individual facade directly impacts the District as a whole!



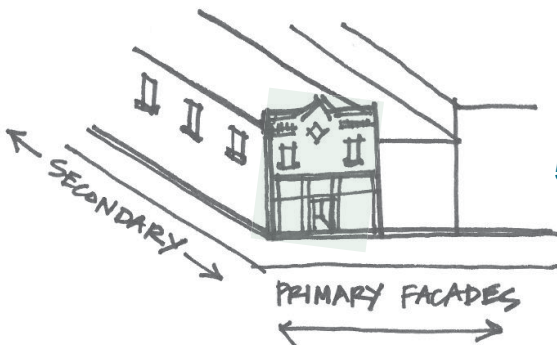
1 THE STOREFRONT is the main level retail face, often with significant display windows or entry points. The storefront's purpose is to engage the pedestrian with the building.

2 UPPER FLOORS/UPPER FACADE often include double hung windows, window hoods, and more utilitarian elements.

3 THE PARAPET can include the cornice or very top of the facade. Depending on the era, it can be elaborate in detail, often used to convey the wealth of the original owner at the time of construction.

4 PRIMARY FACADE If a building were a person, its smiling face would be considered the primary facade. A primary facade is the front of a building which faces a main street and often includes the public entry. It is important to maintain or take care in rehabilitating the components of a primary facade. If parts of the face are changed too much, the facade becomes unrecognizable. No one wants that!

5 SECONDARY FACADE A secondary facade is any full or partial facade which is not the primary facade. In a downtown setting, this is a common condition at corner properties or adjacent to an alleyway. Occasionally, funding or grants for rehabilitation projects may not apply to secondary facades so be sure to check requirements.



Rehabilitation Guidelines



Historically, hand-crafted materials were used to construct and adorn commercial buildings. At the time of their construction, it may not have even been a consideration that these buildings and their materials would still be standing today. With a thoughtful approach to rehabilitation however, these materials can continue to serve a useful life for many more years to come.

Within the historic district, avoid exterior materials that are more residential in nature. Dry stack stone, vinyl windows, or a shingled awning are not appropriate in a historic commercial district.

1.1 HISTORIC BUILDING MATERIALS

Becoming familiar with an overall understanding of building materials used in historic commercial construction is a first step in knowing what is appropriate in rehabilitation efforts. Not all contemporary building materials are appropriate for historic structures, both from a maintenance and aesthetic standpoint. Usually, through existing historic fabric or historical photos, you can determine the original building materials used to construct a commercial property. The building's era can also give you clues. Knowing the year your property was built is a fairly simple fact to find out and can offer immediate insight into its architectural heritage. Reference page 7.

Just like residential dwellings at the onset of our country's development, early commercial buildings utilized a fairly limited and straight-forward palette of materials, usually a wood frame clad in more wood or brick. Commercial buildings and stores from the 1800's are usually narrow as they were somewhat limited by wood spanning capabilities. Once a span greater than about two dozen feet was desired, support columns or bearing walls were added, which impacted floor and layout space. Therefore, if you own an older building - it may seem obvious but it can be costly to reconfigure support structures such as columns and walls because they are quite literally holding the building up.

Once a township or area developed enough to establish transportation routes for more materials, commercial buildings expanded into masonry construction and cladding. Masonry includes brick, stone, concrete block and other types of individual units laid together and bound by mortar. Masonry buildings are more durable than wood frame buildings, standing more resistive to threats such as moisture, high winds, and minor fires. Because of its lasting durability, masonry has been and continues to be a preferred building material in downtown districts where structures are adjacent to one another. However, the sheer weight of masonry buildings requires a robust foundation. If a historic masonry building is settling or sagging, it could be due to an inadequate foundation to support the weight of the building materials.

Masonry is considered both a historic and contemporary building material. It has been used for centuries and although a simple material, it can be utilized in countless ways. Masonry often reflects the style and taste of society during the time of a building project. Patterns, color combinations, cadence, and

NPS Preservation Brief

#16 The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors

Rehabilitation Guidelines



brick



stone



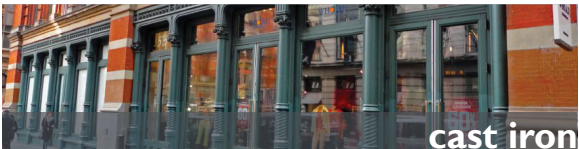
metal & concrete



aluminum



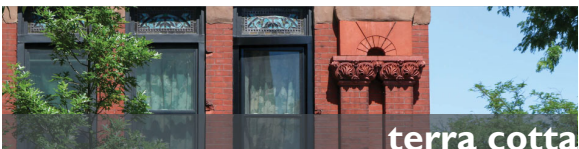
glass



cast iron



glazed tile



terra cotta



wood

directional orientation can all be used to creatively or subtly express stylistic ideals through masonry. Take care to highlight and not hide any special applications or techniques in your building's materials, as it will add to the interest, diversity, and historic expression within the District.

Once steel became more widely available toward the end of the 19th century, this manufactured building material allowed greater freedom in building construction and design. Building structure became less dense. Masonry became lighter as it was not carrying the entire load of the building. Exterior cladding could be more decorative and less a part of the building structure itself. Building materials such as tile, terra cotta, cast concrete, and even decorative sheet metal could be colored, glazed, and sculpted to add interest and individuality to commercial buildings.

Into the early 1900's, a preference for intricate details and exterior texture allowed buildings to project a combination of strength and delicate features, prosperity, and refinement. Along with stronger steel frames to provide wider vertical and horizontal spans, the development of elevator technology in the early 1900's also allowed buildings to expand upward. Larger windows became possible with advancements in plate glass production and the use of cast iron storefront components. With the introduction of larger window openings, awnings became a necessary tool to control heat and light from the sun as well as provide a sheltered building entrance.

Toward the middle of the 20th century, aesthetic preference shifted to cleaner expressions of line and form, and once again these societal preferences were reflected in commercial buildings. This style evolution was applied to both new construction and existing buildings. A common practice involved re-cladding or covering original intricate facades with monolithic metal panels or asymmetrical swaths of materials. This effort to 'cover up' and 'modernize' the past has now been in place so long (60-70 years) that it has become historic fabric itself. The mid-century modern style has itself claimed a relevant place in the progressive history of commercial architecture.

In summary, work purposefully to protect and preserve the district's unique mix of materials from the time periods they reflect. Building improvements and repairs in historic districts call for timeless over contemporary materials.

Rehabilitation Guidelines

1.2 STOREFRONTS & ENTRIES

There are several components that when combined create a complete and cohesive storefront. Special attention should be paid to these areas when rehabilitating, restoring, or uncovering storefront elements.

WINDOWS should maintain historic style, location, and scale and proportions. Windows play an important role in commercial buildings from any time period. Buildings from the late 1800's to 1930's used large storefront windows to capture daylight as well as provide pedestrians a view inside. This layout can still be attractive to tenants today as it provides free advertising. Take care to retain original window opening sizes. A retrofit to residentially scaled window openings should be avoided.

TRANSOM WINDOWS are the windows above floor level windows and doors. They maximize the amount of daylight that filters into a building. Historically, they sometimes provided a means of ventilation. The transom area is often first to go during a building's first major renovation in its lifetime, replaced with signage or covered up all together. Pay attention to their locations and sizes. Rehabilitation of the transom area is highly encouraged if not currently utilized.

HISTORIC DOORS into business or retail likely had glass panels, creating a welcoming effect. If your storefront has a door that leads to a second floor, it could have been a solid door. This was to add privacy for the second floor occupants. When replacing doors, pay attention to their original intent of style, location, and size by referencing historic photos.

BULKHEADS, also known as knee walls, are common elements under display windows in a storefront. Be conscious of their proportion and materiality. Bulkheads could include decorative paneling or applied trim.

Storefronts of the early 20th century were usually wood frame. Some of them included cast iron columns that provided structural support as well as architectural decoration. Uncovering or restoring cast iron detailing



The top photo is a storefront just prior to rehabilitation work shown in the bottom photo on a small, one-story commercial property. Notice the difference in appropriateness of materials and rehabilitation of the transom windows above the entry area.

Many buildings within Spencer's historic district are examples of a two-part commercial block. This is described as buildings with two or more stories, usually horizontally defined, that provide multiple functions. First floor (also referred to as street level or storefront) is typically retail. The upper floors were typically used for private offices or residential dwellings historically.

The earliest commercial buildings were relatively simple and unadorned structures. The late 1800's and very early 1900's saw the use of more detail and decoration such as ornate cornices, window hoods, and unique brick patterns.

The 1900s into the 1920s established a return to more traditional detailing, commonly influenced by a revival of classical styles. The influence of Greek and Roman details can be seen in the use of columns, pediments, and building symmetry.

Rehabilitation Guidelines



Entryways play a crucial role in human interaction with a building. They can advertise, provide security, and ventilate. Entry points are the physical line between the inside and outside.

People can experience entries with all senses! How a handle feels, the weight of a door when pushed open, the sound of a hinge or jingle bell. The smell of baked goods upon entry. The sight of a store name or address number on the door which reassures them they are in the right place. Keep in mind all the purposes an entry serves and be sure that renovations do not detract from the potential impact that a historic entrance served.

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#11 Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts

#16 The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors

#47 Maintaining the Exterior of Small and Medium Size Historic Buildings

Mid-century storefronts require a mid-century mindset! Check out this **swanky resource:**
www.carson.org/Home/ShowDocument?id=23747

can provide a sense of grandeur to a storefront. Make sure not to cover fine details with layers and layers of paint. Highlight details with appropriately contrasted accent colors.

Think ahead about new signage, specifically type and placement. Allow enough room for signage above awnings, but keep the proportions in scale with the building/façade.

Limit the amount of utilities/mechanical devices on the front of your building. Keep these items to the side or back of the building, or screen behind an existing parapet on the roof.

Alterations to district storefronts that have an overall detrimental effect include:

- Painting historic brick, stone and other natural materials.
- Removing or covering up cornices, panels, columns, or original materials.
- The addition of details that are not original or appropriate to the building period (shutters, wood shakes, corrugated metal, etc.).
- Signage that is out of scale or covers details.
- Reducing or increasing original window size, removal of original windows which can be rehabilitated, or boarding up windows on any floor on any facade face.

Refer to historic photos for original entry designs. If possible, retain historic doors, sidelights, and pilasters. If replacement is necessary, preserve original openings, even when replacing frames or glass panels.

If one building houses multiple tenants/storefronts, create unity with a common paint color, and possible accent colors to differentiate between businesses.

Do not add or remove entryways from your facades. If entryways must be added, consider using an original window opening to maintain solid-to-void ratios.

Rehabilitation Guidelines

Historic wood windows were made from very stable old growth trees. Today's modern wood windows are made from softer, younger trees. New thermal glass panels can be retrofit within a historic window sash. This approach can create an aesthetic and energy efficient win/win solution. Wood and metal window frames, when properly cared for, can last 100+ years.

On the other hand, the lifespan of new vinyl replacement windows is typically 10-15 years. Typical vinyl replacement windows can shrink or warp, allowing for air infiltration or binding of windows.

These replacement windows do not fill the original vertical dimensions of the window opening. Notice the wood infill material below the windows is fading and warping. The end result is a choppy, visually distracting effect. Not to mention, this approach calls for many more transition points between materials, which results in far more opportunity for air and water leaks.



I.3 WINDOWS & GLASS

Windows are a significant part of most buildings. Maintaining the original arrangement, number, cadence, shape, style, and material is important to maintaining historic integrity. If replacing or repairing, look at windows on an individual basis and consider the following:

- Honor original window locations and openings.
- Rehabilitate historic window components if possible, including frame, sill, sash, hardware, and glass. Deteriorated windows can often be repaired. In the case that a window has deteriorated beyond repair a window that matches the original window's material, dimensions, style, and number of panes should be installed.
- If originally clear, replacement glass should be clear, non-reflective, and without tint. If a tint or texture, or etch originally existed, changing to clear or smooth glass is discouraged. Follow suit of original glass design. Consult a glass manufacturer to understand modern, efficient, yet aesthetically appropriate options.
- Historic hardware should be preserved if possible. Parts of original hardware can be replaced, or a foundry can recreate new hardware from original examples or look for similar hardware from an architectural salvage business. Attempt this route before replacing with contemporary or generic hardware such as pulls, locks, and brackets.

Windows that have been reduced in size or modified should be restored to their original dimension and style. Do not place smaller windows in window openings and fill in the surrounding voids with a solid material. This deteriorates from the scale and balance of the entire facade. Closed or infilled window openings should be reopened if possible.

Preserving second floor windows (or window sizes) enforces a sense of occupancy and a well maintained property. Interior window treatments, rather than exterior boarding up, can be used to prevent an unoccupied or abandoned appearance.

Rehabilitation Guidelines



It is possible to rehabilitate historic steel frame windows. Here, the second floor metal frames were left in place, sanded, repainted, and populated with new, thermally efficient glass. New metal hardware was cast from an original piece for the operable portions of the upper windows.

Notice the transom windows on first floor had previously been painted and these were opened back up upon installation of new units.

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#9 The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows

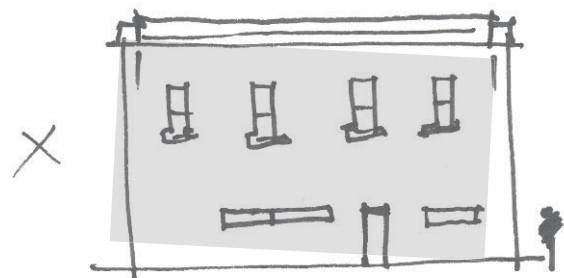
#13 The Repair and Thermal Upgrading of Historic Steel Windows

When/if seeking state or federal funding assistance for rehabilitation projects, window dimensions on all accounts (height, width, depth, frame size) must be maintained.

Do not install shutters that are just for show, or are not historically accurate. Research historical photos of your building.

Do not install replacement window components that are not historically accurate in material or proportion, such as egress-sized, residential vinyl windows.

If abandoning a window opening, do not match the surrounding facade material with an exact infill material. In a subtle way (color or material) it is actually encouraged to 'show' where a window opening once existed. Do not install the new material flush with the adjacent wall, but rather inset it slightly. If you blend in an opening, it could throw off the entire exterior balance of the historic facade.



Windows on the storefront level should always relate to a sidewalk, pedestrian scale. Traditionally, glass would have taken up a majority of the first level facade to provide daylight, display goods, and welcome people in. Window replacements that are too small, residentially scaled, and take up a small portion of the storefront are discouraged.

Rehabilitation Guidelines



Architectural details, large and small, give each building its unique personality. From rosettes on steel lintels to elaborate cornices, these details are the spice added to the recipe of each building.

Other architectural elements include window hoods, pediments, iron storefronts, and carved details. Elements can be made of stone, metal, terra cotta, and even wood. If elements have been painted, remove loose paint and have them repainted. If they consist of stone or brick and have not been painted, clean them appropriately and let their natural beauty shine.

Use originally intended materials when possible to repair or create architectural features such as brick, stone, and wood. Avoid plywood and avoid metal where not originally used.

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#14 New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns

#17 Architectural Character - Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving their Character

#34 Applied Decoration for Historic Interiors: Preserving Historic Composition Ornaments

#27 The Maintenance, Repair and Replacement of Architectural Cast Iron

#23 Preserving Historic Ornamental Plaster

I.4 ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

If intricate architectural details cannot be recreated, strive to honor the overall form and massing of the original in favor of outright abandoning the detailing.

Do not create false historic fabric with generic or clashing features from different eras. Research your building's historical photos and take inspiration from original elements. Architectural details should be appropriate to your building's original era.

Don't apply elements from different eras to your facade or apply re-used elements from another building without first consulting an architect or architectural historian regarding its appropriateness.

Salvage shops or even online shops specializing in architectural recreations can be a great source for rehabilitation projects, especially smaller architectural features. Check these resources before settling for generic, contemporary elements widely available from a big box store.

Consider contacting a professional architecture firm, custom wood shop, or specialty fabricator if you need to replace or repair architectural elements. These professionals will be able to guide you to material and labor sources you may not be aware of or have access to. Historic rehabilitation and new construction utilize different tools and skill sets and sometimes general contractors do not have the necessary tools or experience needed to tackle rehabilitation work.

Don't neglect maintenance of historic architectural details. They can be more expensive to replace rather than repair.

Do not camouflage elements or materials by applying a monochromatic paint scheme which spans different building components. Highlight architectural details with complementary paint colors. Pay attention to neighboring buildings for indications of period appropriate elements and color contrasts.

Rehabilitation Guidelines



Maybe you've heard that mortar doesn't hold bricks together. Instead, it holds them apart. That's true, at least while the mortar is wet. Once the mortar is dry, the bricks are 'stuck' together.

The terms 'repointing' and 'tuckpointing' are frequently used interchangeably. Most commonly, these terms are referring to the removal of deteriorated mortar and installation of new mortar.

Mortar plays a crucial role in the envelope of a building, and should be monitored so that deterioration does not evolve into a severe issue. Remember that mortar is also used for stone, terra cotta, and concrete block. So examine your facade on a regular basis where these materials exist.

When mortar is disintegrated, cracked, or loose, moisture will migrate into the wall. This can cause damage to interior plaster and drywall, or worse. If the moisture becomes trapped in the wall, it will freeze and expand, causing even more damage to interior and exterior.

Do not repoint over unstable, disintegrating, or loose mortar. Remove old mortar to two or two and a half times the width of the joint. Proceed with caution or avoid altogether harsh methods such as grinders to remove old mortar.

1.5 MORTAR

Repair to mortar should be done by hand to prevent further damage. Seek out an experienced contractor who has a proven track record working on historic buildings.

When replacing old mortar, the composition of the new mortar should match the original in color, texture, strength, and composition. Sand (size) in the new mortar should match the original. Make sure joint width and profile match as well.

Testing original mortar will determine the right 'chemistry'. Mortar and brick analysis will outline the composition of the existing materials. Mortar should be softer in composition than the brick (so that if there is a crack, it will happen at the mortar, and not the brick). This is why analysis and match is extremely important. Work with your contractor to understand these options. These tests are relatively inexpensive when compared to the detrimental effects of bad mortar which can cause irreversible and expensive harm. Before applying new mortar, do a test patch in an inconspicuous area - recommended size is at least two square feet. This test panel should be reviewed for appropriateness before proceeding as it will serve as the standard by which the rest of the work is done. The test panel should also document the safe technique in which the old mortar can be removed without widening the joints.

Once mixed, mortar should be used within 30 minutes. Retempering should not be attempted. When refilling mortar, joints should be damp (not standing water). Refill deeper areas first.

Take care to notice and match vertical and horizontal joint styles, which can vary in treatment especially on mid-century era buildings.

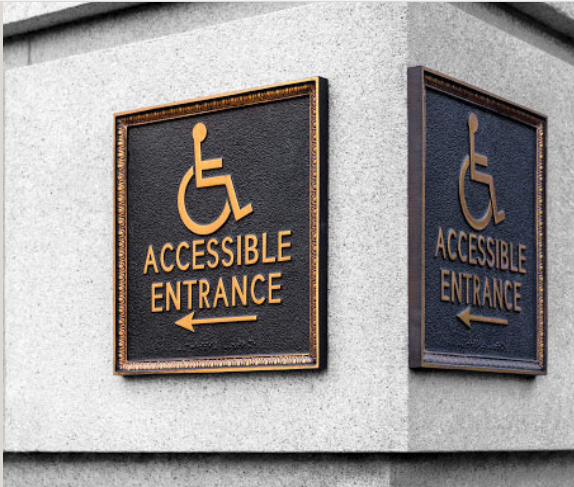
Do not caulk over mortar joints. Do not use caulk as mortar.

Do not overfill joints adjacent to worn, rounded brick or stone edges. Finally, mortar should be slightly recessed in order to avoid a weak featheredge.

search: NPS Preservation Briefs

#2 Repoint Mortar Joints

Rehabilitation Guidelines



The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that to the greatest extent possible, historic buildings must be accessible. Most building owners are not exempt from providing accessibility within their properties, especially those utilized by the public.

Often in older buildings, our contemporary notions of accessibility, personal space, and convenience must be addressed in creative ways. A vast majority of small to medium size commercial buildings never had and never will have elevators. But navigating stairs is only one part of addressing accessibility.

Accessibility modifications to historic properties should provide an accessible path to an entrance, and access to a restroom, goods, services, and programs. As much as possible, entry to your building for every user should be through the primary public entrance.

I.6 ACCESSIBILITY

Before making accessibility alterations, first assess and articulate exactly what features of the property are historically significant. This will help to determine (for building owners and contractors) a unified understanding of character-defining features which should be preserved.

As alterations to historic properties are made, accessibility measures should be implemented. There is no universal exemption from accessibility just because a property is historic. However, special provisions for accessibility may be allowed for older buildings based on local and state codes.

Consult local codes and regulations in regards to accessibility, which can overlap or differ from state regulations. Work to meet the most stringent requirements to protect against the need for future, additional alterations which could compound cost and damage to historic fabric.

When modifications to a property are introduced, priority should be placed on retaining historic materials and features as much as possible.

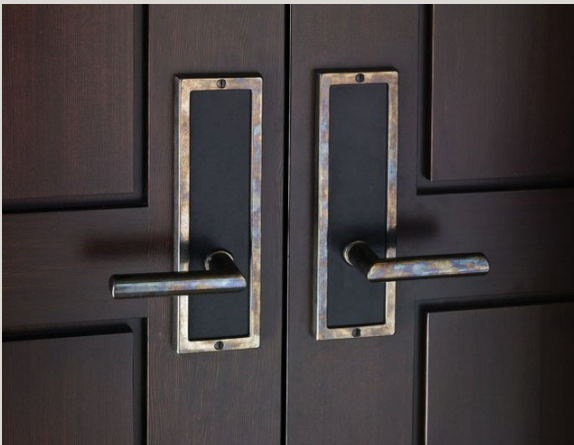
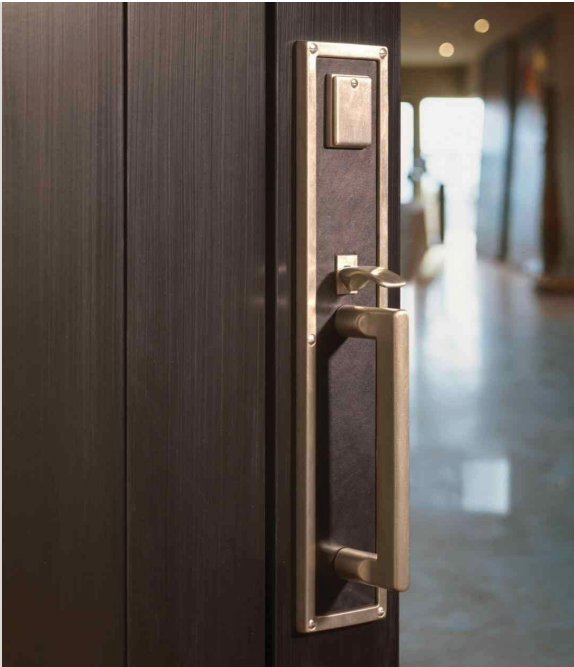
Consider consulting with an architect or City official to gain insight on the compliance of your proposed alterations before implementing them.

Accessibility modifications to historic properties should be planned with the ability to reverse the changes. For example, cover stairs with your alterations, rather than demolish them.

Accessibility modifications should be visually compatible with the historic property, yet differentiated enough in design as to show evidence of change to the property.

Modifications to flooring should provide for a level, stable surface. This is not only for wheelchairs, but for elderly or less balanced individuals to prevent a possible trip or fall.

Rehabilitation Guidelines

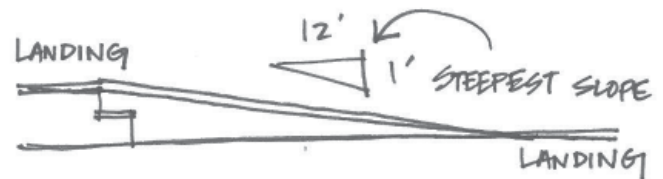


Lever-handled replacement door hardware, for ease of grip, should be favored over knobs. Not all knobs need be replaced, but at a minimum consider lever-handle devices along the main entrance and path of travel to accessible restrooms and services. Power assisted door openers can also be considered.

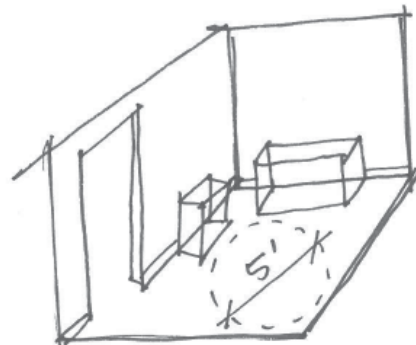
Regrading a public entrance may not be an option. If the main public entrance to a property cannot be made accessible without damaging effects to historic fabric, an accessible entrance can be provided elsewhere with clear signage. Consider an existing window opening as a possible appropriate cut-in for a new door, more so than a random location on the facade.

Compliant ramps should be considered over mechanical lifts when possible.

If incorporating a ramp, keep in mind that it should be a 1:12 slope or shallower to really create a comfortable condition. Consider also the landing at the top and bottom of the ramp - it should have adequate space to navigate a turn or for a wheelchair to rest in place without rolling. Measure a 5' diameter circle - this is an appropriate turning radius for a wheelchair. Be sure that the railings and edge of the ramp are designed in a way which is safe for wheelchair use. Ramps should be designed in a way which complements the existing historic character of the building.



The same 5' diameter circle approach applies to space needed inside an accessible restroom.



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This is a must read if you are considering accessibility modifications

#32 Making Historic Properties Accessible

Rehabilitation Guidelines



A successful example of an adaptive reuse project in Spencer includes the conversion of the Farmers Trust and Savings Bank (W 4th & Grand) to office space.

Reuse projects should maintain, enhance, and celebrate a building's historic architectural character.

Reuse projects should not dilute the historic integrity and architectural significance of downtown properties with extensive changes to exterior characteristics or materials.

I.7 ADAPTIVE USE

It's not unusual for the purpose of a building to change as owners or tenants change. If you've found yourself with the opportunity to revive a retail space, upper story residential apartments, or an entire building, incorporating the building's history can create a unique and memorable project.

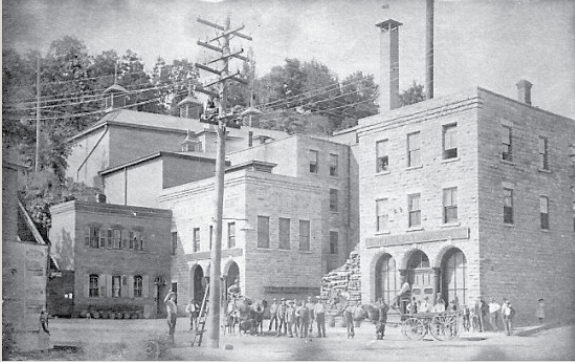
Adaptive use refers to the re-purposing of a building for a new function. A motor vehicle service station could be converted into a restaurant. An old church could become office space. A fraternal lodge building could be converted to housing.

In these examples, there are historic features that can be incorporated which can enhance the new use by making it more authentically related to the building. The overhead doors of that original service station may not be necessary for a restaurant, but the size of the openings could perfectly inform the location of new windows. This solution fits the inside use and honors the exterior facade. Maintaining the size of the opening will maintain the building's historic integrity.

It would be regretful to bury ornate brickwork or tile behind generic, exterior siding. Allowing defining features allows the original character to continue to shape the building's 'vibe' even when the use changes.

One benefit to adaptive use (or adaptive reuse) is the slow of urban sprawl. Re-purposing existing structures often takes advantage of existing infrastructure. It creates a hub of activity in which a higher density of people benefit. Sometimes, such projects can be eligible for local and/or state funding sources that promote reuse. Projects that rehabilitate an existing building often have shorter construction schedules which allows a business to open sooner. Ultimately, adaptive projects prolong the useful life of a district's historic assets.

Rehabilitation Guidelines



Once a brewery, now a boutique hotel, this rehabilitation thoughtfully maintains the obvious additions to the property over time - instead of trying to unify the entire complex with one exterior material or modern aesthetic treatment.

I.8 HISTORIC ADDITIONS

Additions are common, especially when a building has been around for a long time. An addition is commonly the most affordable way for a business to remain open and allow growth at the same time. Additions that are 50+ years old are generally considered historic fabric and integral to the story of the entire building. There may be exceptions to this rule of thumb if the addition is outside the period of significance and this may be considered on a case by case basis. Care should be taken to maintain their unique features so that the timeline of the building is clear to the observer.

Additions may be inclusive or void of related architectural detail. In either case, details should not be added to camouflage the addition nor should they be removed from the original structure to alter its architectural character.

Overall, additions should enhance and complement, rather than faithfully mimic, original structures. Treatment of existing additions follow the same guideline advice herein as their parent structures.

I.9 HISTORIC ACCESSORY STRUCTURES

By definition, an accessory structure is a secondary building on the same property as the primary building. Examples would be a carriage garage to a house, or a detached storage building that is of similar age as the primary building, or at least 50 years old.

Maintain the historic architectural integrity of accessory structures, in the same fashion you would a primary structure or addition within the district. This especially applies to accessory structures contributing to the period of significance. More leeway may be afforded to non-contributing structures. If the accessory structure is of no historic significance, it may be acceptable to demolish or renovate. However, just because it is of no historic significance does not mean alterations are of no significance to the district. Any changes should relate to the character of the historic district and the primary facade should relate to the public on a pedestrian scale.

These independent structures can provide unique opportunities for smaller and more creative re-use. A previous storage building could become a small boutique or an art studio much more affordably than an entire two-story, 10,000 sf commercial building. Think creatively about the types of tenants that might find accessory buildings appealing.

Site and Streetscape Design



Keep in mind that historically, the streetscape was pedestrian focused. As time marched on, motor vehicles radically transformed the way we flow through and engage with our downtowns. However, the scale of buildings and their relationship to the streetscape can and should continue to respond at the pedestrian level.

Provide trash receptacles, benches, planters, and other pedestrian friendly amenities to accommodate merchants, business people, and consumers downtown. As discussed in the signage section within these guidelines, business signage should also primarily focus on the pedestrian point-of-view.



STREET FURNITURE and FIXTURES New street furniture should be muted and compatible with the historic character of the district. Do not permanently attached street furniture to historic buildings. If they must be attached do so through paving joints or other reversible methods. Do not introduce 'false history' to your streetscape by permanently installing elements which could be misidentified as historic fabric.

Simplify the amount of new decorative features, such as murals and planters, so as not to distract from the character of the historic district. Identify and protect historic streetscape features such as street signs, hitching hardware, and benches and maintain them in their original location.

Attach seasonal and temporary decorative items to durable, non-historic fabric. Do not damage historic material by hanging signs or decorations.

SIDEWALKS and CURBS Avoid bright colors in paving or site features, such as benches and light posts. Let the site elements complement the buildings rather than distract from them.

Brick sidewalks should make sure to meet ADA guidelines.

Retain curbs where historically present and when ramps or cut-ins need to occur, use compatible material to the surrounding site context. If needed, specify unobtrusive railings at ramps so as not to block or distract from historic facades.

Historic concrete had a warmer (brownish) appearance with some exposed aggregate. Avoid expanses of bright/white/gray concrete for repairs or new construction on walks and curbs in the historic district.

LIGHTING Existing historic light fixtures should be protected and incorporated into streetscape design. If historic lighting no longer exists, choose closely matching fixtures. If historic lighting never existed from the period of significance, choose modern yet complementary fixtures which will enhance the appearance and scale of the facade and overall district.

Site and Streetscape Design



Downtown Spencer, just prior to the 1931 fire.

Streetscape elements that can contribute to the historic district along with the actual buildings include tiled store entries and sidewalks, original stone curbs, fire call boxes, manhole covers, trolley tracks, and other such historic fabric infrastructure. Preserve or rehabilitate these items as you would your historic facades.



AWNINGS and CANOPIES Favor canopies and awnings over trees within the commercial historic district. See section 4.3 for more guidance on awnings and canopies.

VEGETATION While trees add a nice natural element, historically, trees were not planted in downtown commercial areas. As vegetation matures, it may cause maintenance issues if not properly cared for. If new vegetation is planted, carefully consider how it will exist with surrounding elements once it grows, with lower profile or potted plantings being more suitable as to not block storefronts.

SCREENING Site infrastructure, such as utility meters, mechanical and electrical units, antennae and satellite dishes, and trash containers are a necessary part of modern daily life. Strive to place or fix these items in a manner which causes the least amount of visual impact to the surrounding streetscape.

When a building owner has control over these infrastructure elements, avoid placing them near roof edges where visible from the public right-of-way. Strive for an inconspicuous location which does not cause damage or visual alterations to historic fabric. Service areas, such as loading docks, should be located away from pedestrian areas and screened, if possible, to reduce visual impact.

Retain and repair existing historic screens and fences. When screening is introduced, retain the character of the district, do no harm to existing historic fabric, and execute the construction in a way that can be reversed or removed in the future. Within the historic district, do not use chain-link, concrete block, plastic, vinyl, fiberglass, or mesh construction fencing.

PARKING The City of Spencer has on-street parking on Grand Avenue, with additional side street parking. When possible, shared parking (available to more than one tenant) is encouraged. Off street parking could include some landscaping or water run-off control measures and should be mindful of pedestrian scale. Work to maximize, organize, and overlap existing parking use as to not introduce new parking lots within the historic district.

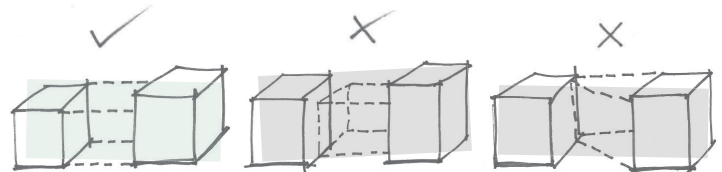
New Construction / Infill



While primary facades should rest right upon lot lines along Grand Avenue, it would be historically appropriate to angle in or recess an entry such as at 508 Grand. These types of entries were common on early to mid 20th century buildings. They scoop pedestrians in and offer a little shelter.

3.1 BUILDING SETBACKS

Historically, it is rare for a commercial structure within a business district to have any type of front yard. When considering a new structure within a commercial historic district, consider the alignment of neighboring structures. Any new construction project should follow the requirements of local and state ordinances and codes. These types of buildings should consider visibility, sight lines, and infrastructure requirements around entries. A secondary structure on the property such as a garage, storage building or shop area will also need to follow city requirements.

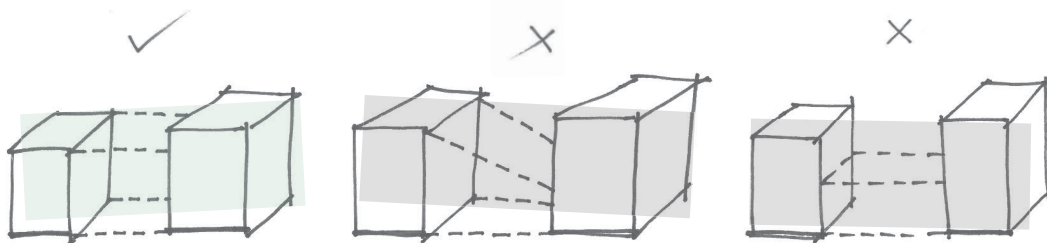


3.2 MASS & SCALE

Consider the context and surroundings when developing a brand new project in an established historic district. A vacant lot between two-story buildings would look inappropriate if infilled with a one-story building. Similarly, a large project that consumes multiple parcels of adjoining property should consider the proportions of other nearby structures. It is often possible to minimize a monolithic facade by designing architectural interest that is relatable to the scale of its surroundings. While taking cues from the height of surrounding structures, also be cognizant of window types and sizes so that the overall cohesive quality of the area is maintained. The mass of a building can be minimized or exaggerated by the proportion of different materials and colors.

Don't break continuity of neighboring existing buildings. The historic character of the district and adjacent buildings should be considered when determining the proportions, heights and widths of a new façade.

It is recommended that the mass of a new facade take inspiration from adjacent buildings. The orientation of the roof and primary facade should be cohesive with surrounding structures. In general, within the commercial historic district, buildings should have a rectangular mass.



New Construction

The overall form of a building should be similar to surrounding buildings. Understanding one simple thing to look for can really open your eyes to historic architectural design, or any design really! If considering a new building, take stock of surrounding structures. Do they express horizontal elements (such as 410 Grand) or vertical elements (such as 407 Grand)? Often times on a historic commercial block, the buildings will generally follow one expression or the other. However, opposite orientations next to each other is not a bad thing. Texture and contrast are certainly interesting aspects of design.

The buildings below express vertical form. Look around the district, what do you see?



search: NPS Preservation Briefs

#14 New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings

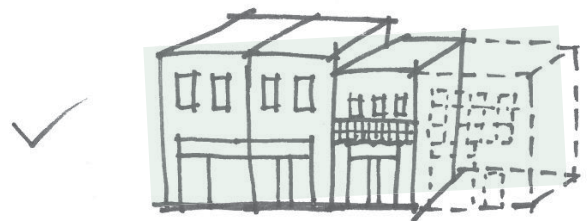
New Construction within the Boundaries of Historic Properties

3.3 BUILDING & ROOF FORM

Continuity is key with new buildings within a historic district. With the exception of religious buildings, most buildings in a commercial district have a flat/sloped roof that sheds water to the back or side of the building. Occasionally you'll find a barrel vault roof, or one with a very shallow pitch. These roofs are often terminated by a short parapet wall and/or cornice, and are rarely visible from the street. New construction should incorporate similar roof styles to those found within the district. Incorporating residential style roofs should be avoided.

If you're constructing a new building, take cues from your neighbors. Contemporary infill should be considerate of the adjacent buildings but should not duplicate adjacent buildings. Details such as window arrangement, cornice lines, brick work, and stone ornamentation should reflect those of adjacent buildings but not be outright copied.

New building infill should follow the established form of surrounding buildings. In other words, it should not be considerably taller, shorter, wider, or narrower than other buildings on the block. It should retain a commercial building design, and not reflect a residential scale or window arrangement. New buildings should retain the historical facade elements of the district as well, such as a storefront which engages at the pedestrian level, and rhythmic or evenly spaced windows which reflect a historical design aesthetic.



New Construction



10 E 4th St, Spencer exhibits a desired and appropriate solid-to-void proportion. Notice the inviting storefront scaled for pedestrian view and entry. Take note that the transom glass remains, and balances out the proportion of the facade which would be vastly different if the transoms were painted over or filled in.

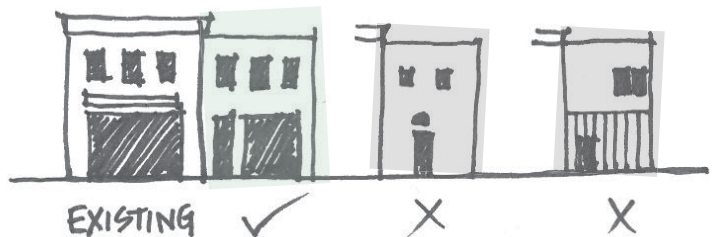
In contrast, the below photo shows street level alterations which have closed off the storefronts, creating too much solid wall and too little window openings. The result is uninviting, fortress-like, and creates a barrier for pedestrian engagement.



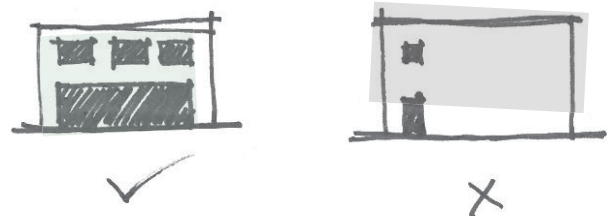
3.4 SOLID-TO-VOID

Solid-to-void refers to solid (walls) to void (window and door opening) proportions. If a new building within a historic district ignores these established proportions, it will look too contemporary and out of place. Historically unaltered buildings provide good cues to understand solid to void proportions. Within historic districts, first floor storefronts with large expanses of glass are the norm. New construction should follow these cues so that overall continuity is maintained. An added benefit is visibility for both tenant and consumer, as well as an abundance of daylight.

As buildings get taller, the size and scale of windows plays a critical role. Again, neighboring structures with some historical integrity will give you good direction for your new window size and placement. Windows that are too small or too few for the mass can also make the scale of the building feel larger than necessary. While smaller (and/or fewer) windows may be more affordable, the finished project will have an unsubstantial, undesirable feeling both inside and out. These rules also generally apply to secondary facades such as sides of buildings and back sides of buildings.



Don't construct solid walls without windows or doors. Solid walls with no openings should not face a street. Cadence in window arrangement, spacing, and size should take cues from and complement adjacent buildings.



New Construction

free standing structures

The design of new, free standing accessory structures should be considerate of all rehabilitation design guidelines as they pertain to new construction. Within the district, new accessory structures should contribute rather than detract from the historical character of surrounding context.

This does not mean a new structure need necessarily copy historic detailing, but it should 'fit.' A new structure should express a commercial (rectangular) rather than residential (pitched) design and scale. A new structure should appropriately face the main street on which it resides, with a primary facade. Check City ordinances (zone Central Business District) to access a list of appropriate accessory building uses. Some uses, such as multi-family residential or service stations require special approval.

3.5 ACCESSORY STRUCTURES

There are circumstances when a new addition to an existing building is the most efficient means to growth. Local ordinances and codes will often determine the ability to add on to an existing building. So check first your parameters for width/height/depth.

When planning an addition, take cues from the parent building and integrate details that would indicate that the two belong together. However, it is not appropriate to outright copy a neighboring, historic building. This creates a false sense of history. In fact, it is encouraged that the addition have a clear line of demarcation to indicate the old vs the new. This could be as simple as offsetting walls, or including a window where the addition meets the old building.



In a downtown setting tenants change. Even if two parcels are connected now, it is possible that at some point in the future there will be two smaller tenants, each wanting a separate storefront or identifiable entry. Even if your addition does not include an entry door now, design the facade for a possible future state that will look appropriately planned.



With additions, pull similar materials and colors from a parent building, such as matching brick. Take inspiration from some of the form and fenestration such as window sills and hoods, window types and sizes, and perhaps a simplified cornice. These nods to history will make for a more visually cohesive district, yet allow historic structures to stand proud.

search: NPS Preservation Briefs

#14 New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings

Signage & Applied Elements



Signage size and placement is important. Notice the different signage treatments on these small facades. The middle jeweler sign is too contemporary in shape with the detrimental effect of covering the transom area and overpowering the individual storefront, not to mention its neighbors. The establishments on either side have much more successful approaches. The one to the left hangs above the transoms, properly illuminated with appropriate fixtures. The one to the right sits in the sign board and is perfectly scaled. Which condition is most appealing to your eyes?

Signage and awnings contribute to a building's first impression and cohesiveness. Applied elements will change over time, as tenants and cultural taste change. But they should always complement rather than distract from the building's façade style and exterior paint or material colors. Pick colors/patterns that also complement or are at least cognizant of surrounding buildings.

*A variety of sign styles, appropriate to the historic context of their parent building, will enhance the diversity of the district. **Historically appropriate or historically inspired signage per building should be prioritized above universal conformity to shapes, fonts, materials, or colors district-wide.***

If signage is informed by its parent building, there is visual harmony which conveys a sense of strength, permanence, and pride. If signage ignores its parent building is applied as an independent element, it can dilute the integrity of the district and convey a less stable, more transient feeling to the downtown.

A sign can serve multiple functions: to convey information and to attract attention. If a sign is appropriately designed and considerate of its historic context, the building can actually act as the attention-getting feature, and the sign can serve one clear purpose of conveying information. Aim for this team approach between signage and building, allowing each to shine.

4.1 SIGN SIZE & LOCATION

Within historic districts, signage was originally designed for a pedestrian viewpoint. Locate and size signage in a way that is relatable and readable upon approach to the building as a pedestrian, ideally no more than 20 feet above sidewalk. Signage on a façade that only addresses vehicular traffic is inappropriate to the integrity of the district. Exterior signs on upper levels which address only vehicular viewpoints should be avoided.

Tenant signage should not cover historic building name signage.

Signage should enhance and complement a building's architectural features. Signage should be viewed as part of the façade composition, and fit within or around existing architectural features. Many historic buildings were designed with an area for tenant signage. A sign should enforce, rather than interrupt, façade composition. Avoid covering significant architectural details and do not partially obscure architectural details with signage.

Avoid signs that cover more than 20 percent of any single façade face. Signage should be sized to complement and not dominate a façade.

Sign material should be compatible with historic building material. Utilize materials appropriate to a building's period of style. Plastic, vinyl, or other obvious synthetic sign materials are generally discouraged. Materials such as metal, wood, bronze, etched/painted glass, cast iron, tile, and painted signage are all appropriate and durable choices depending on the original building design.

Permanent letters and icons attached to the face of the facade should enhance the historic design of the building, and not vastly alter the character.

Avoid damage to architectural details when attaching or removing signs. Carefully consider placement of signage attachment hardware to minimize damage to the façade or architectural elements.

Signage & Applied Elements



Historic signage on the Poole Building (528 Grand) utilized illuminated, individual letters. Notice the light is concentrated on the letters only, and the letters project up from a simple base. They do not alter the facade because they are not attached to a board which is then attached to the building.

Take into consideration that the sign may be removed or replaced in the future. Do not utilize the sign to cover or hide existing or new damage caused by hanging. Utilize existing fixture positions or holes when possible. On masonry, drill new attachment holes into mortar, rather than the brick or stone.

When a building includes multiple businesses, an integrated signage approach is encouraged. Signs for multiple tenants should consider placement of other tenant signs. A building owner may want to develop standard parameters for their tenant signs including guidance for size, scale, and graphics to ensure that one sign does not dominate or detract from other signs. Vertical and/or horizontal alignment of multiple signs should be taken into consideration.

Do not overpower adjacent signage or facades. Consider placement within a building's façade as well as the context of neighboring facades. Pay attention to horizontal and vertical visual precedents set by the parent building as well as neighboring buildings.

Color use can play a large role in the success and appropriateness of signage within the historic district. Color is a way for businesses and brands to distinguish themselves from one another. The aim of the guidelines is not to limit possibilities of color choice but to make sure signage projects do not detract from the historical context. Sign colors should aim to coordinate with overall façade colors.

Limiting signs to three colors is a good rule of thumb. Bright, primary colors should be used sparingly.

Signs should not have an excessive amount of white or blank space compared to their content. This can create a retrofit or generic appearance. Signage within the historic district should have a clean or custom appearance fitting to each façade.

Obsolete attached signs that no longer relate to current tenants can be confusing. Old tenant signage should be removed, unless historic signage is deemed to contribute to a building's significance. Consider displaying obsolete but historically significant signage on the interior of a building if it relates to the building's original owner or use.

If signs are illuminated, the illumination levels of multiple signs per façade should match in brightness. Internally illuminated signs should be limited to individually illuminated letters.

Flashing signs should be avoided unless utilized historically and approved by the City.

Color temperature and intensity can affect the historic integrity of an entire streetscape. The light bulb(s) or light strips illuminating a sign should be shielded from view and light should be directed toward the sign.

Signage & Applied Elements

4.2 SIGN TYPES

HISTORIC SIGNS such as commercial building name plates or engraved blocks that were integrated as part of the exterior architecture, should be retained and not covered with other signage. An example of this is the stone façade lettering of Clay County National Bank, 407 Grand Ave.

Historic painted wall signage, even if ghosted, could be left in tact or restored. This is a phenomenon where old advertising evolves more into the realm of public art. This would be appropriate if considered part of the historic fabric to the period of significance, and if it cannot be confused with current tenant signage. See also Murals page 38.

WALL SIGNS are one-sided signs attached directly to a building face. Wall signs are an appropriate and often utilized sign type in the historic district. A typical location for wall signs was the 'signboard' or the area between the storefront and the upper façade above.

Walls signs can be placed to be framed by architectural elements and should consider fenestration patterns.

A wall sign should be relatively flush to the building façade and not project further than architectural elements, such as the fascia. Some 3D elements are appropriate to create texture, such as a carved and painted logo, or surface applied letters.

Wall signs should be fixed at the pedestrian level, generally less than 20 feet from the sidewalk. If menu or poster boards are utilized, they should be positioned near the business entrance and should not obscure any architectural details or features.



Notice how the contemporarily constructed sign at 318 Grand above nicely follows the historic approach to signage location and design. Individual letters above display windows creates very readable, classic, aesthetically appropriate signage in a commercial historic district.



Original signage on 400-404 Grand

search: **NPS Preservation Briefs**

#25 The Preservation of Historic Signs

Signage & Applied Elements



The projection sign installed on the Tangney Hotel building at 605 Grand is a great example of an appropriate projection sign. It employs an appealing yet classic deco design, is simple and readable, and is illuminated as well. This sign would be overscaled on a two-story commercial building, but is just right on this large structure.

Permits from the City are generally required for signs. The information below is provided for general guidance. For more extensive requirements on each sign type, consult the Spencer City Code, Chapter 7/Signs, Canopies, Awnings and Marquees or contact the Planning Department.



ALLOWED

Historic signs
Awnings, canopies
Bulletin/menu signs
Projection signs
Illuminated signs
Monument and free standing signs
Walls signs, murals
Window, decorative, holiday, and real estate signs



NOT ALLOWED

Moving, blinking, and portable signs
Signs advertising illegal or obscene content
Signs obstructing traffic lights or providing misleading safety or directional messaging
Broken, damaged, hazardous, or abandoned signs

PROJECTION SIGNS, also known as overhanging signs, are two sided signs mounted perpendicular or at an angle to the face of a building. Projection signs and symbols were often used historically.

Projection signs should not obscure architectural features or wall signs.

The scale of projection should be in harmony with the building's overall size and scale.

The hardware or brackets to hang projection signs should be compatible with the architectural style of the sign and façade.

Projection signs should be hung at or above 10 feet and located in close proximity to the business entrance.

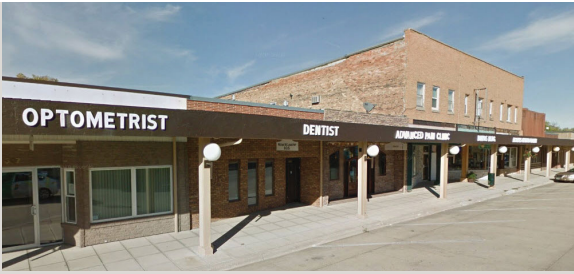


The individual signage and awnings on the 421-423 Grand block respond to each building.



The deco style sign at 418 Grand is a great example of individually lit signage letters, readable day and evening.

Signage & Applied Elements



As with signs, a variety of awning styles, appropriate to the historic context of their parent building, will enhance the diversity of the district. Historically inspired awnings per building should be prioritized above universal conformity to shapes, fonts, materials, or colors district-wide. The above approach to a universal canopy and generic signage may have been well intended, but it has a very detrimental effect on the character of this downtown area. Compare the effect above with the more successful approach to individual awnings in both a contemporary application and a historic picture of downtown Spencer.



Signage should not be the primary purpose of an awning. Awnings act to protect buildings, people, and products from the sun, wind, and precipitation. A secondary purpose for awnings is signage, which should be executed in a way which is historically appropriate. Awnings and canopies should not replace or cover up historic signage locations. Awnings should only be placed at locations conventional to weather protection (above doors, windows, and walks).

search: NPS Preservation Briefs

#44 The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings: Repair, Replacement, and New Design

4.3 AWNINGS & CANOPIES

Historically appropriate materials such as canvas are appropriate for awnings. High quality and fade resistant nylon is also suitable. Metal, vinyl, plastic, and temporary awnings are discouraged.

Awnings and canopies should be historically and commercially appropriate. Avoid a residential approach to scale and material such as shingles, shakes, or pergolas (unless photo evidence indicates these design elements to be original).

Signage on awnings should appear on the awning valance, if possible. Lettering should be pedestrian in scale and not oversized in relation to the size of the awning. As a guide, signage should occupy a minority of any given facade.

Applied awnings and canopies should not serve as featured architectural elements. Awnings should complement the architectural style of the building and not obscure architectural features fully or partially.

Contemporary awning styles on historic buildings are discouraged. Don't use dome or umbrella shaped awnings (unless photo evidence indicates the shape to be original). Mid-century facades may be an exception, with flat, shallow-sloped awnings. Make an awning choice appropriate to the building's style.

Inspect for any original awning hardware left on a building from its original era, or inspect historic photos. Take inspiration from the original location and style of hardware for newly installed elements. If possible, reuse or repair original attachment parts and utilize existing locations.

Size awnings to match window/storefront widths. Oversized awnings dominate a façade.

Complement, rather than compete, with the style, color and height of other awnings on the same block.

Awnings throughout the district should generally follow uniform projections even if they are of different style.

Signage & Applied Elements

Historically, murals had an advertisement purpose. Some were and still are used to adorn an otherwise plain secondary facade and call out goods and services of business tenants. In recent decades, murals fall more into the realm of public art commissioning the talents of a wide range of artists, from professional painters to groups of school children.

Because each mural is an individual work applied to a specific building component, they are by their very nature one-of-a-kind elements which often require individual, case by case approach to maintenance and repair.

Each existing mural condition is dependent upon several factors, including the actual physical surface and material on which it is applied, light or shade levels which can affect fading or icing, and of course the individual technique and original media of the artist(s). Do not attempt to rehabilitate an existing mural yourself. Consult a professional painter (with historic material experience) or an architect.

4.4 EXISTING MURALS

Conduct a regular, yearly inspection of exterior murals in order to observe and remedy any small areas of deterioration before it becomes a larger, more costly problem to fix.

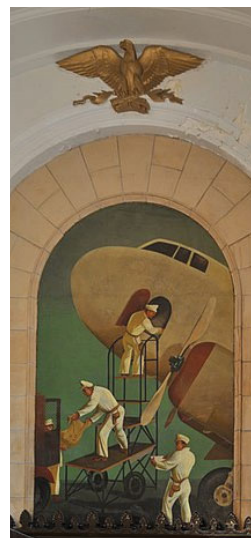
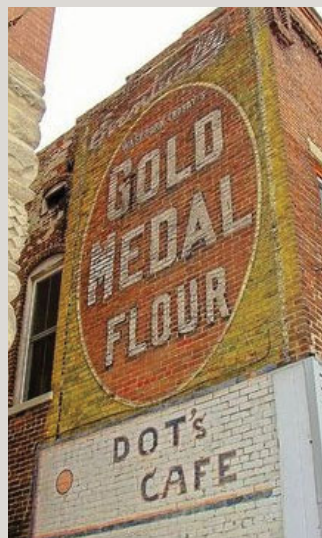
Trim or remove surrounding vegetation to prevent wear and tear damage.

Remove and clean surface grime without the use of detergents or abrasives and with minimal water pressure. If possible on newer existing murals, consult the artist for cleaning recommendations. Test an inconspicuous area before cleaning the entire mural.

Don't attempt to restore or retouch a mural on your own. First consult the original artist if possible, as there may be copyright issues. Hire or consult a professional to complete rework as each condition is custom.

Don't obstruct, cut through, or partially alter existing murals without proper approval/notification of the artist and City of Spencer. There may be a way to integrate exterior modifications into the mural design.

If enough historic fabric exists, consider having a paint analysis done to determine the original paint colors of an existing mural.



Historic 'murals' of the early 20th century were usually a form of advertising. The Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) in 1934 changed that when the government commissioned thousands of artists to create murals, paintings, and sculptures as a means of providing work during the Great Depression. These works tended to convey culture, people, and events. Some of these old advertisements and works of art still exist today and we tend to refer to them collectively as murals. Historic murals can be left to fade (ghost) or may be restored by a professional.

Signage & Applied Elements



This exterior wall mural in Dayton, OH has a historic vibe yet uses a contemporary graphic approach. It blends art and signage with its striking appearance which also incorporates the historic district's logo.

Murals often stand as a first impression to a building, a district, or even a community. They can be noticed by many people long before the more subtle or functional elements of a building. A mural's maintained quality or disintegration can directly affect the impression of its surrounding context. It is important to balance the application of new murals with an awareness of long term maintenance and funding to take care of them. Contact the City of Spencer if you have an idea for a new mural. They welcome the opportunity to assist and collaborate on these important community projects.

American Institute for Conservation

Mural Creation Best Practices
culturalheritage.org

Don't skip this valuable resource. It has links to even more information, depending on needs such as site selection, artist agreements, and maintenance.

4.5 NEW COMMISSION MURALS

New murals tend to fall under the category of 'public art' more so than 'advertising,' however they can successfully do both. At their best, murals respond to the local vernacular, documenting events, honoring historical figures or places, or expressing the spirit and cultural brand of the community. Commissioned murals could honor the original use or industry of a building, but with contemporary artistic expression. Murals can create a photo-op in your community, calling attention to the unique charm and character of the district and creating a destination for visitors or customers. For this reason, even if murals are privately commissioned for a specific building or business, consider including the name of the town or historic district.

Carefully consider placement for new murals:

- Murals should cause minimal impact on surrounding properties by not affecting views or significantly changing the historic context.
- New murals should not be located on primary facades unless historic precedent can be demonstrated. Murals or historic advertisements, if they existed, were found on secondary facades. Therefore, if these elements are created today, they are more appropriate on side, alley, or back building faces.
- If a mural is to be placed on a side or secondary facade - hold it back a measurable amount, such as one structural bay, as to not compete with the primary facade.
- Avoid murals on unpainted brick or other masonry. An already painted, secondary facade is a better choice for a mural location.
- Consider a mural applied to a board, panel, or non-woven fabric system, which can have less long-term impact on a building as long as the method of fastening is not overly damaging. This approach also allows an artist to work off-site and out of weather conditions while creating the mural.
- New murals should not compromise the historic integrity of a building by obscuring, covering, or spanning multiple surfaces and materials.

A district should not commission so many or such large murals that proper upkeep cannot be maintained.

Signage & Applied Elements



Contemporary murals increasingly serve as gateway billboards and encouraged photo-ops. They can highlight one significant item of interest, or combine a town's greatest hits into one image. Before embarking with a new mural, it's important to understand its purpose so that it can meet that purpose. Is it advertisement, branding, or public art? Think about what surrounds the mural, like this pocket park in Galena. What is in front of your mural - nice landscaping or a telephone pole? Will it be in shade? People will take pictures with murals, so best to plan for it!



Mason City, IA is home to significant prairie school buildings. Its downtown displays a collection of murals - all different yet loosely based on a similar graphic style. These murals have been placed on new construction or already painted secondary facades. Some of the murals contain the name of the businesses which commissioned them, bridging the categorization between advertising and public art. Along with its signature architectural style, these murals enforce the town's brand to tourists and residents.

Plan with the expectation that a new mural, at best, will last 20-30 years. Determine who will have ownership over the mural for this long. Will it be the building owner, City, or artist's responsibility to maintain it?

Encourage the artist or your city to specify the artist acknowledgment and contact information directly on the mural or a nearby plaque.

Invest adequate time in preparation work. Select an undamaged wall and properly stabilize, remove loose material, and seal. Take care that preparation and cleaning methods do not damage historic building materials. Identify the wall material and proceed with a test patch for cleaning with non-abrasive materials designed specifically for the substrate. If the test patch is successful, proceed with small steps.

Do not apply paint outdoors in temperatures below 45 degrees or to a frozen/cold surface as defrosting can lead to moisture issues with the applied paint. Be mindful of temperatures during the drying time, not just the applying time.

Permanent, subtle pigments are more stable than bright pigments which will fade over time. Colors which complement other exterior colors on the facade are encouraged.

Apply priming layers to present smooth surface and protect from moisture absorption. A final seal (and reapplication as needed) will save time and expense in long term maintenance.

Care can be given to direct water away from the image by way of building up the actual surface (via gesso) or with gutters and other proper drainage.

There is no one size fits all to advise actual mural content. If there was, they wouldn't be special and they wouldn't represent your community's unique point of view. Consider a mural committee (which meets as needed) composed of local artists, city officials, HPC members, and economic and tourism leadership. Consider how the mural will serve the historic district by enhancing it's character, yet embracing contemporary notions of how people engage with your downtown.

Signage & Applied Elements



Do not paint over masonry, it can compound moisture problems.



Consider using window graphics to add more contemporary color and branding elements.

search: NPS Preservation Briefs

#10 Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork

#38 Removing Graffiti from Historic Masonry

4.6 PAINT & COLOR

Use colors that are historically appropriate. There are several paint manufacturers who have a line of historic colors to help you get started.

Use colors to emphasize, rather than obscure, architectural details. Bright hues tend to be inappropriate, sometimes causing visual distraction, and darker colors can sometimes hide details in shadow. Where appropriate, consider using colors to highlight differences on features including doors, moldings and trims.

If enough historic fabric exists, consider having a paint analysis done to determine the original paint colors of building elements. Many paint layers may be in place.

Leave brick and stone unpainted whenever possible because paint can trap moisture causing the masonry to deteriorate, leading to costly repairs. If masonry is already painted, re-painting (after proper prep) is generally appropriate when a brick wall can be painted a 'brick color.'

Do not minimize architectural detail and character with a monolithic paint scheme.

Do not attempt to modernize an exterior facade within the historic district with contemporary or trendy paint colors.



Aside from painted bulkhead trim at the base, a monochromatic paint treatment masks most detail on this facade.



Although eye catching, this paint scheme is not appropriate in a historic district.



This building strikes the right balance with accent paint that does not distract from its architectural character.

Building Owner Guide

SO YOU'RE HAVING SOME WORK DONE...

If you have a building within the Grand Avenue Commercial Historic District, and wish to alter, repair, or expand portions of it, a permit may be required. Please consult with the City Planning Department. These guidelines aim to enhance, rather than hinder, collective property values within the downtown area.

GETTING STARTED As a first step, collect available background resources for your building, including floor plans, building documents, and historic photos. The National Register nomination document for Grand Avenue Commercial Historic District is a great start. Spencer Main Street, Clay County Heritage Center, and your Historic Preservation Commission are excellent sources of information. (Page 46). A little research into past architects or contractors having worked on your building may lead you to archived construction documents (drawings of your building). When you own a property within a historic district, it will benefit you and potential future buyers/tenants to acquire these resources if at all possible.

Photograph your building as it exists today. Documentation will be beneficial if you need to correspond with anyone about an issue. If you're not comfortable assessing conditions, ask a specialty contractor. For instance: a roofing contractor can give an assessment on existing conditions, and tell you if repairs are urgent in order to stabilize the building.

- ☐ *Building owner in possession of building specific historic photos and/or drawings (originals or duplicates)*
- ☐ *Building within historic district boundary*
- ☐ *Proposed project follows Standards for Rehabilitation*
- ☐ *Before starting, project intent is conveyed with contractor through conceptual drawings, photos, and on-site meeting*
- ☐ *Before starting, project is professionally designed via documents and specifications (architect)*
- ☐ *Proposed project follows applicable recommendations within these guidelines*
- ☐ *Proposed alterations are appropriate to the property's specific historic character*

PLAN, BUDGET & APPROVAL Prioritize a list of repairs and rehabilitation to your property. It isn't always realistic to accomplish everything at once, so consider what is most important. Be sure to consider how smaller projects may affect each other. For example, repointing a brick wall should happen after it is determined that the roof/roof edge is water tight otherwise your work may be for nothing.

Budget is the ultimate parameter, and quotes from contractors are free of charge, but not all contractors are qualified to perform sensitive work on historic fabric within a historic district. Ask for references of similar projects. Tackling a project yourself might have code, safety, and re-work cost implications so check with the Spencer City Code of Ordinances and the City Planning Department.

Depending on project scale, you may be able to tackle a simple project with a contractor and design on the fly. For more substantial projects, you may need to hire an architect to design and draw up documents and specifications so that the contractor has a plan to follow and a materials list to carry out the work. If you plan to apply for state or federal grants, or state or federal historic tax credits, you will need to work with your City as well as the State Historic Preservation Office well in advance for approval of your plans.

Just getting an estimate for work is not always enough. Create a budget (and writing it down) which will help you balance needs and wants within your available means. Budget for materials, labor, professional services, permits, and contingencies. Keep in mind that unexpected things come up more often than not in rehabilitation projects, so set aside 5-10% of your budget for contingencies and consider it spent.

IMPLEMENTATION Rehabilitation work within a historic district requires a tolerance for problem solving on site. As walls are opened up, surprises are found. Make sure you partner with professionals that are experienced in work other than just residential, just new construction, or just interior work. Will the project affect anyone occupying the building? Create a plan that allows the tenants to continue with business and provides a safe environment for customers.

Building Owner Guide



MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

Buildings can serve a longer life if maintenance is routinely addressed. Tackling repairs at the onset of an issue will be far less costly than allowing disrepair to compound into damage. Disregard of routine maintenance can also have health and safety implications, which can also be costly to address.




Building owners should practice a quick, quarterly inspection of their property. Some issues may be highlighted during different seasonal conditions, such as ice or sustained heat. A checklist is provided below. Print it off and take it with you as you observe, and keep a running record over time to help you understand if any settling, cracking, or deterioration is progressing from your last inspection. Take photos of problem areas to monitor changes over time. A record of inspection and maintenance will be valuable if you want to sell your property and demonstrate its integrity to a potential buyer.

DATE: _____


Foundation

- ☐ Mortar condition
- ☐ Foundation walls leaning or tilting
- ☐ Mold or moss growing 
- ☐ Damp or wet basement 
- ☐ Cracks (new or advancing)


Masonry

- ☐ Missing or loose mortar
- ☐ Peeling or blistering paint 
- ☐ Bulging walls 
- ☐ Mold or moss growing 
- ☐ Cracks in masonry (new or advancing)

Cladding/Trim

- ☐ Mold or moss growing indicating moisture issue
- ☐ Warping or splitting of wood boards
- ☐ Peeling or blistering paint 
- ☐ Rotting wood

Paint

- ☐ Peeling or blistering paint 
- ☐ Obscured details due to excessive paint layers


Windows/Doors

- ☐ Loose or broken glass
- ☐ Gaps in putty around frames and panes of glass
- ☐ Broken hardware or sash cords
- ☐ Rotting or warps in wood at sash and frames

Ornamentation

- ☐ Dents, cracks, or missing pieces
- ☐ Rotting wood
- ☐ Chips to terracotta, stone, or plaster
- ☐ Corrosion, holes, or rust to metal




Storefronts

- ☐ Peeling or blistering paint 
- ☐ Broken glass in doors, windows, or transoms
- ☐ Rotting wood, brick, metal or stone material

Roof/Waterproofing

- ☐ Missing flashing at valleys or ridges
- ☐ Rust or unstable seams on metal roofs
- ☐ Sagging ridges or overhangs
- ☐ Holes or tears in roof material
- ☐ Missing roof material (shingles, slates, tiles)


Gutters/Downspouts


- ☐ Broken seams in gutters or downspouts 
- ☐ Downspouts broken at foundation 
- ☐ Sagging or loose gutters
- ☐ Gutters missing or damaged
- ☐ Gutters not connected to downspouts
- ☐ Downspouts discharging toward foundations 
- ☐ Does grade slope away from building?


Signage/Awnings

- ☐ Torn or damaged material
- ☐ Missing or loose hardware

NOTES: _____

 Indicating moisture issue

 Indicating structural issue

 Indicating drainage issue

Building Owner Guide

HISTORIC BUILDING MAINTENANCE TIPS



Maintenance should be done on a regular basis. Even new materials may fail unexpectedly and can allow water infiltration. Paint may not cure properly and prematurely fail. The effects of neglect can easily multiply over the course of one freeze/thaw cycle, and be accelerated by extreme heat and exposure to rain and snow. New construction should also be observed on a regular basis to avoid long term deterioration.

search: NPS Preservation Briefs

#1 Cleaning and Water Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings

#2 Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings

#6 Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings

#10 Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Buildings

#42 Maintenance, Repair, and Replacement of Historic Cast Stone

CAST IRON

www.dorothearestorations.com/consultancy-project-management/architectural-cast-iron-care-and-maintenance-guide

RECOMMENDATIONS

Salt used for de-icing can potentially damage masonry and mortar joints at a building's base over time. Use these products sparingly or use sand to reduce slippery surfaces.

Don't paint masonry. Paint can seal the wall system and prevent moisture from evaporating.

On already painted areas - hand scrape loose or damaged paint and prime and paint surfaces to eliminate direct exposure to weather.

Examine brick and mortar for cracks and voids. Replace cracked bricks and repoint mortar joints to minimize water infiltration.

Make sure rain and snow can drain away from the building. Standing water and ice can cause damage.

CLEANING

Set up a routine to clean and maintain your building. Brick and stone are not indestructible. Test the materials and use the most gentle cleaning method possible.

Masonry cleaning could be done to stop deterioration caused by chemicals or to remove excessive soiling.

Do not sandblast brick or stone. It accelerates deterioration.

Historic windows, especially original glass panes, require gentle cleaning. Make sure not to etch historic glass, use gentle pressure and non-abrasive cleaning pads. On historic metal window frames, avoid corrosion and discoloration by using warm water only or diluted ammonia-free solutions.

Use natural bristles for cleaning, never metal. Gentle cleaning can include a water rinse or steam cleaning.

Do not use vinegar or extremely hot water for cleaning. Water or non-ionic detergents can be used to clean cast iron details.

Financial Resources

INVESTING IN SPENCER

Financial resources may be available to assist you with your building project. These resources vary depending on your property's qualifications (which may apply to all or part of your building), adherence to design guidelines, and other regulations set forth by fund distributors. Note: Financial assistance for historic preservation is more often targeted toward building owners rather than business owners.

Funding sources and incentives are ever evolving. The following information is current as of 2021. Check with local government officials, the SHPO, or grant specialists to inform yourself on the latest resources as new programs become available.

LOCAL FUNDING

City of Spencer TIF Rebate Program

The purpose of Spencer's Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Assistance program is to encourage quality economic development, enhance the industrial and commercial property tax base, create quality employment and attract businesses that contribute to the general well-being and quality of life of Spencer's residents. To accomplish these goals, the City will utilize TIF to provide incentives to developers and businesses to locate and expand in Spencer and to extend and improve city owned infrastructure to promote the development of industrial and commercial properties.

STATE / REGIONAL FUNDING

Evolving funding sources may be awarded to rehabilitation projects which conform to the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation (see page 12-13) and may be subject to review by the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

State Historic Tax Credits

This program focuses on the rehabilitation of historic buildings by providing a state income tax credit. Qualified projects may receive 25% of rehabilitation costs to rehabilitate spaces and character-defining features. Cost for rehabilitation work on commercial properties must be at

least 50% of assessed building value excluding land. These tax credits, especially for large projects, are in high demand and awarded on a system of sequencing and prioritization.

HRDP Grants

Historical Resource Development Program (HRDP) grants provide funding to preserve, conserve, interpret, enhance, and educate the public regarding historical resources of Iowa. Funded by the Resource Enhancement and Protection Act (REAP), these grants may be awarded to projects focused on the preservation and conservation of historical resources such as museums and historic preservation entities in the non-profit, civic, and private business sectors. Qualifying rehabilitation projects require that a preservation architect oversee the work. These grants require matching funds and emergency grants are available.

CDBG

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) are funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, under the Iowa Economic Development Authority. A City, City entity, or non-profit entity may apply for this grant which matches funds for infrastructure improvements and/or streetscape façade rehabilitation for a group of properties within a historic district.

Main Street Iowa Challenge Grant

The challenge grant program aims to improve the physical and economic health within a community's Main Street District. Funds are awarded to brick and mortar projects and reviewed for eligibility by Main Street Iowa.

FEDERAL FUNDING

Federal Income Tax Credits

A 20% income tax credit is available for the rehabilitation of historic, income-producing buildings. The buildings must be "certified historic structures" by the Secretary of the Interior by way of the National Park Service. The SHPO will review proposed and completed work to ensure that it follows the Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation. Projects must go through an application process and follow a multi-phased approval process.

Additional Resources

LOCAL

City of Spencer Planning Department

The City will administer local grants and incentives, ordinances, and zoning regarding building projects.
spenceriowacity.com/government/planning-department
101 W 5th Street | 712.580.7200

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

Certified by the National Park Service in 2001, the city appointed commission works to advance Spencer's historic preservation program.
spenceriowacity.com/government/planning-department
101 W 5th Street | 712.580.7200

Spencer Main Street

A local non-profit organization supporting all things downtown. Connections, events, knowledge, resources.
101 W 5th (PO Box 7937) | 712.262.7246
spencermainstreet.com

Clay County Heritage Center

Historic photos and documents, community history.
7 Grand Avenue | 712.262.3304
claycountyheritage.org

Spencer Public Library

Check the library for historic information and research.
21 E 3rd St | 712.580.7290 | spencerlibrary.com

STATE

Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

The SHPO identifies, preserves, and protects Iowa's historic/prehistoric resources. Administers state and federal historic preservation programs, and maintains a survey and inventory collection of Iowa historic properties.
iowaculture.gov/history/preservation
historic.preservation@iowa.gov

Historic Architectural Database (HADB)

Database containing property information, site inventory and nomination forms, and survey reports of historic places in all Iowa counties.
iowaculture.gov/history/preservation/historic-archaeological-inventory

Preservation Iowa

A statewide non-profit organization building partnerships to enhance Iowa's economic and cultural future through the preservation of the state's historic resources.
info@preservationiowa.org

Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) Main Street Iowa

State level downtown resources for Main Street communities such as Spencer, small business resources.
iowaeda.com | iowaeda.com/main-street-iowa/
515.348.6184

State Library of Iowa

Access Sanborn fire insurance maps which cover 1870's - 1920's buildings from 360 Iowa towns
statelibraryofiowa.org

NATIONAL

U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service (NPS)

The National Park Service oversees historic preservation efforts at the national level, including the National Register of Historic Places, tax incentives, grants, and many more resources. The Preservation Briefs, Tech Notes, case studies, and other technical literature provide well-written and illustrated guidance on preservation issues.
nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm
nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/tech-notes.htm

Glossary



The facade of the Floete/Thomas Building at 410 Grand has undergone changes over the years, but remains an easy to identify building in downtown Spencer with a strong horizontal Directional Orientation.

Adaptive Reuse

The process of repurposing a site or building for a different use other than what it was originally designed for.

Addition

New construction which is attached to an existing building.

Alteration

The process of actively and purposefully changing a property without regard to its original architectural style, details, or characteristics.

Cadence

The flow, pattern, or rhythm of events.

Cladding

The act or process of bonding one metal to another, usually to protect the inner metal from corrosion.

Corinthian

An ancient Greek style similar to the Ionic, but usually with slenderer proportions and characterized by a deep capital with a round bell decorated with acanthus leaves and a square abacus with concave sides.

Contemporary

Characteristics showing evidence that a building, structure, or detail was recently designed or built.

Context

The physical area that surrounds a building or site.

Contributing

A contributing building, site, structure, or object adds to the historic associations, historic architectural qualities, or archeological values for which a property is significant.

Design Guidelines

Instruction and guidance to understanding the Standards of Review.

Directional Orientation

The relation of a structure, either vertical or horizontal, with components that are visually related to its directional character.

Doric

An ancient Greek style that typically consists of a fluted of smooth-surfaced column without a base.

Easement

A right in which an individual has over property owned by another individual.

Façade (Primary)

The exterior face of a building that faces a primary street and usually has the main entrance.

Historic District

A historic district possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development.

Historic Fabric/Historic Material

Original or historic material (wood, masonry, glass, terra cotta, metal, etc.) still in existence and use from when the building was constructed.

Historic Significance

Importance for which a property has been evaluated and found to meet the National Register criteria.

Integrity

Authenticity of a property's historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property's historic or prehistoric period.

Ionic

An ancient Greek style characterized by the use of volutes.

Listing

The formal entry of a property in the National Register of Historic Places; which can also be referenced as registration.

Mitigation

The reduction of a negative impact.

Glossary

Mothball

The act of stabilizing a deteriorating building, which provides structural soundness.

National Register of Historic Places

Our nation's official list of buildings, sites, and districts that are significant to our history and culture. This list is maintained by State Historic Preservation Officers.

Nomination

The official endorsement to list a property on the National Register of Places or as a historic landmark, site, or district.

Noncontributing

A building, site, structure, or object that does not add to the historic significance of a property.

Palladian Window

A window in the form of a round-headed archway with a narrower compartment on either side.

Party Wall

A wall that divides two adjoining buildings and is shared by the tenants of each building.

Pediment

A low gable, usually of triangular shape, placed above the horizontal structure of the lintel if supported by columns.

Period of Significance

Span of time in which a property attained the significance for which it meets the National Register criteria.

Preservation

Focuses on the maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of a property's form as it has evolved over time.

Primary Façade

The front side of a building.

Proportion

The comparison of one dimension to another.

Project

Any alteration, construction, demolition, or relocation of property.

Quoins

Quoins are masonry blocks at the corner of a wall. Some are structural, providing strength for a wall made with inferior stone or rubble, while others merely add aesthetic detail to a corner.

Reconstruction

Re-creates vanished or non-surviving portions of a property for interpretive purposes.

Rehabilitation

Acknowledges the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the property's historic character.

Remodel

The process of actively and purposefully changing a property without regard to its original architectural style, details, or characteristics.

Restoration

Depicts a property at a particular period of time in its history, while removing evidence of other periods.

Scale

A term used to describe the proportions of a building in relation to the elements that determine the style and characteristics of a building.

Secondary Elevation

The side of a building that does not face a main street and is not commonly visible to the public.

Setback

The orientation of a building in relation to the lot lines and other set boundaries.

Significance

Importance of a historic property as defined by the National Register criteria in one or more areas of significance.

Site

Location of a significant event, a prehistoric or historic occupation or activity, or a building or structure, whether standing, ruined, or vanished, where the location itself possesses historic, cultural, or archeological value regardless of the value.

Solid to Void

The proportionate amount of solid wall area in relation to the void areas such as windows, doors, gables, or arches.

Streetscape

A group of buildings, facades, sidewalks, etc. that define a certain street.

Structure

A functional construction made for purposes other than creating shelter, such as a bridge.

Style

A distinguished set of characteristics related to a specific time period in which a structure embodies.

Transom

A window set above the transom of a door or larger window, a fanlight.

Notes



