

A Working Guide to Building Design and Maintenance Downtown McCook, Nebraska

Introduction

This working guidebook will help building owners, merchants, developers, and public officials care for and protect the integrity of the historic buildings and the architectural character of the traditional Main Street commercial business district in McCook, Nebraska. Design guidelines promote responsible preservation practices that protect the irreplaceable historic commercial buildings important to the community.

These guidelines will help building owners plan and implement design projects that are consistent with and maintain the character of the district. They will also help facilitate the McCook Design Committee in the facade grant application, review and approval process.

Design guidelines are a tool to inform decision-making about the maintenance, repair and rehabilitation of historic buildings as well as the design and construction of new buildings. They outline a set of basic principles that minimize the bias on individual tastes and preferences and look at physical qualities and characteristics of the district as a whole. Each building presents a different issue, situation, and opportunity but together as a group they define the area. The design guidelines provide direction for informed decisions and establish a clear set of rules for everyone so building and public improvements will enhance, not diminish the character the overall district and enhance rather than diminish the value of the district.

It is important to use the assistance of a qualified architecture professional during the planning stage of each project when required by Nebraska state law. Seek guidance from the Nebraska State Historical Society's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) during the planning stage of complex projects or those projects seeking tax credits.

Additional things building, property and business owners need to keep in mind:

- Improvements must meet all applicable local zoning codes.
- Building, property and business owners are responsible for all building permit requirements.
- Improvements must meet all state and local regulatory codes and restrictions.
- Improvements should be made using high quality materials, construction methods and contractors. Cheap materials and poor workmanship don't last and in the end cost more to fix or replace.

The best outcomes are those that meet the needs of the property owner, follow basic design principles while preserving the elements that give a building and the district as a whole its historic character. Because the buildings in downtown McCook are the key to attracting businesses, residents, and visitors to downtown, it is important to retain the historic character of these buildings by following these design guidelines.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

Choosing the appropriate type of work to be done on Main Street commercial buildings is the first step. **Preservation** focuses on the maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of a building's form and character as it has evolved over time. **Rehabilitation** acknowledges the need to alter or add to a building to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the building's historic character. **Restoration** takes a building back to a particular period of time in its history, while removing evidence of other periods. **Reconstruction** re-creates vanished or non-surviving portions of a building for interpretive purposes.

Things to keep in mind when planning a building preservation, rehabilitation, restoration or reconstruction project:

Importance in history. Is the building historically significant? Is it a rare survivor or the work of a master architect or craftsman? Did an important event take place in it? Is it listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places? Is it a contributing building to an already existing National Register of Historic Places Commercial District?

Physical condition. What is the existing condition, or degree of integrity? Has the building survived largely intact or has it been altered over time? Are the alterations an important part of the building's history? Preservation may be appropriate if distinctive materials, features, and spaces are essentially intact and convey the building's historical significance. If the building requires more extensive repair and replacement, or if alterations or additions are necessary for a new use, then Rehabilitation is probably the most appropriate.

Proposed use. An essential, practical question to ask is: will the building be used as it was historically or will it be given a new use? Many historic buildings can be adapted for new uses without damaging their historic character.

Mandated code requirements. Regardless of the treatment, code requirements will need to be taken into consideration. But if hastily or poorly designed, code-required work may jeopardize a building's materials as well as its historic character. Abatement of lead paint and asbestos within historic buildings requires particular care if important historic finishes are not to be adversely affected. Finally, alterations and new construction needed to meet accessibility requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 should be designed to minimize material loss and visual change to a historic building.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards are applied to projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.

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 historic property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. 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 archeological 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.

Consult the following website and links within for further guidance:

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation.htm>

ITS Bulletins (to assist building owners in applying the Standards to rehabilitation projects)

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/standards-bulletins.htm>

How to apply the Standards to common rehabilitation concerns

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/successful-rehab.htm>

General Considerations

Awnings and Canopies

Awnings and canopies add color and interest to the façade of a building and are used to emphasize storefront windows and entrances. They also serve as protection for pedestrians and display windows from the sun and rain. Awnings and canopies do not have to be used on every building. Awnings and canopies are not appropriate for every building. Seek professional design advice before installing awnings or canopies. The use of awnings and canopies should be looked at on a case-by-case basis. They can be dominant design features on the façade of a building, so it is important to make sure there is a good relationship between the awning or canopy and the façade of the building. Consider how the awning or canopy will affect existing architectural features and how it will appear in relation to the scale of the building. If a new canopy or awning is to be added to a historic building where one did not previously exist, it should be designed to be compatible in scale, color, proportion, and material with the building's facade. Before determining the appropriate color and/or pattern for an awning, look at the entire building. If it has minimal architectural detailing, it can be enhanced with a bright accent color or pattern. A more decorated facade should be complemented with a subtle solid color. Select a color that enhances the existing building features. Retractable or operable awnings are encouraged. Long expanses of awning should be broken into segments that reflect the door or window openings beneath them. Awnings should be constructed of durable, protective, and water repellent material. Some buildings in McCook feature aluminum canopies. These canopies can be original, or are later additions that have gained historical significance with the building. Canopies are fixed to the building whereas an awning can be opened and closed or can remain permanently extended. Canopies should always be securely fastened to the façade. Steel rods are often used to anchor canopies. It is important to position the rods so that they blend into the design of the façade.

Objective: To enhance the historic feel of the Main Street district where appropriate while providing sun protection for display windows and shelter for pedestrians.

ENCOURAGED

- Repair, do not remove metal canopies.
- Utilize existing awning hardware and fixtures. Repair before considering replacement.
- Use a canvas color or pattern that enhances, and does not detract from the architectural details of the building. Use bold solid colored or patterned awnings for architecturally simple buildings. Use subtle colored or subtle patterned

awnings for architecturally detailed buildings. Also consider the impact on neighboring buildings when choosing to install an awning or canopy.

- Use professionally manufactured canvas awnings that are colorfast, carry a warranty, and are treated with weather resistant chemicals.
- Use awning shapes that relate to the shape of windows, doors, and other openings.

DISCOURAGED

- Do not use metal stock, fiberglass or structured standing seam awnings.
- Do not use plastic or vinyl formed awnings (with or without plastic grids/baffles).
- Do not use backlighting or internal illumination.
- Do not use plastic grids/baffles or under-lighting with canvas awnings.
- Do not hide important architectural details behind awnings, canopies, or marquees.
- Do not overpower the proportions of the windows or façade with awnings.
- Do not use patterned or bold colored awnings on buildings with a great deal of architectural style and detail.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION BRIEF(S):

(17) Architectural Character—Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving their Character

(35) Understanding Old Buildings: The Process of Architectural Investigation

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

Signs

Signs contribute to the overall image of downtown McCook and give identity to individual businesses and buildings in the district. All signs need to fit the image of downtown McCook while creating a positive identity for individual businesses. A simple, well-made sign speaks more highly of a business than an extravagant or sloppy sign. Choose a professional sign maker carefully. Ask to see samples of their previous work to make sure their design and craftsmanship is appropriate to meeting these guidelines. Signs should be architecturally compatible with the style, composition, materials, colors and details of the building. They should not cover windows, cornices, transoms, or other decorative details. They should complement the building's façade as well as those of neighboring buildings in shape, size, color and material. Quality of workmanship and construction is essential.

Objective: To provide complementary, appropriate and adequate identification of businesses and buildings in the Main Street district.

ENCOURAGED

- Use historic photographs to aid in the design of a new sign.
- Make sure all signs are designed and installed following McCook's sign code.
- Use signs that respect the size and scale of the building and street and do not obscure the building's important architectural details or features.
- Pay attention to how the sign appears in relation to the entire facade. Take cues from the colors of the building for the colors used on the sign.
- Use signs that are attractive in appearance and are pedestrian-oriented in shape, size and legibility.
- Use professional sign companies with experience working in historic districts to design and install signage. Use signs that are constructed of quality long-lasting materials. Workmanship and quality are essential.
- Use incandescent lighting to light signs at night where appropriate. Use lighting that shines down on the sign rather than up to avoid light pollution.
- Use professionally designed laser cut and applied window lettering on storefront windows and doorways.
- Remove temporary signs such as banners and paper signs in windows in a timely manner. The use of temporary signs that outlast the advertised sale or promotion is discouraged.

- Work with corporate chain businesses or franchise companies to find a sign design solution that fits within the guidelines.
- Use signs that reflect the unique individuality of the business.

DISCOURAGED

- Allowing signs to obscure significant architectural details or features or to dominate the façade of the building.
- Signs with poor craftsmanship or poor quality materials; handwritten, homemade, or cheaply constructed signs.
- Cluttering the front of the building or display windows with signs. Window signage should not cover more than 15% of open window space.
- Vacuum formed and internally lit plastic signage.
- Nationally distributed standard signs associated with franchise companies. Custom signage that is appropriate to the architecture of the building and space designed for signage.
- Standard commercial neon lighted signs that can be purchased from a retail store.
- Signs that use fluorescent colors.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION BRIEF(S):

(17) Architectural Character—Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving their Character

(25) The Preservation of Historic Signs

(35) Understanding Old Buildings: The Process of Architectural Investigation

Roofs & Parapets

Roofs on downtown buildings are typically unseen from the front of the building, hidden from view in most cases by the parapet. Stabilize a deteriorated or damaged roof prior to undertaking any work so further damage cannot occur to the building. Downspouts and other drains should be kept clear and well maintained.

Objective: A weather-tight roof is essential to protecting and preserving a building.

ENCOURAGED

- Protect and maintain building roofs by cleaning gutters and downspouts so that water and debris do not collect and cause damage to roof fasteners, sheathing, and the underlying structure. Replace deteriorated flashing and check roof sheathing to make sure there is proper venting and not any moisture condensation or water penetration, and to insure that materials are free from insect infestation.
- Protect a leaking roof with plywood and building paper until it can be repaired.
- Provide adequate anchoring of roofing material to guard against wind damage and moisture penetration.
- Hide mechanical and service equipment on the roof such as air conditioning, transformers, or solar panels so they cannot be seen from the street level and do not damage or obscure character-defining features on the building.
- Carefully design additions to roofs such as residential, office, or storage spaces; elevator housing; decks and terraces; or dormers or skylights so they cannot be seen from the street level and do not damage or obscure character-defining features on the building.

DISCOURAGED

- Leaving a leaking or damaged roof un-protected so deterioration of historic building materials (ie. masonry, wood, plaster, paint and structural members) can occur.
- Letting roof fasteners corrode so that roofing material is subject to accelerated deterioration.
- Installing mechanical equipment on the roof that is visible from the street or damages or obscures character-defining features of the building.

- Building a new roof addition or installing a replacement roof that is incompatible in size, scale, style, shape, material and color or that is visible from the street or damages or obscures character-defining features on the building.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION BRIEF(S):

(4) Roofing for Historic Buildings

(17) Architectural Character—Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving their Character

(35) Understanding Old Buildings: The Process of Architectural Investigation

Windows

Windows are important in defining the historic character of a building. It is important to identify and retain windows and their functional and decorative features when undertaking a project. Moving the location, covering-up, or changing the dimensions of an original window opening is never appropriate because it alters the character of the existing window. In a block of commercial buildings, window patterns contribute to the visual appearance of the entire block. Thus, retaining the location of windows contributes to maintaining important character-defining features. Storm windows can help conserve heat and energy, but often look inappropriate on an older facade. For this reason, consider installing them on the inside of the window where they will be less visible. Make sure that interior storm windows are properly vented so that moisture does not build up between the windows. If storm windows are installed on the outside, their design should match the existing window in shape, profile, sightlines, number and size of panes and color. On upper levels, windows should provide privacy while aesthetically and functionally serving the building. Preserve original materials or details and the shape and size of original window openings. Replace missing original elements such as transom windows.

Objective: To encourage large, open views into the commercial space enhancing the pedestrian experience by providing a visual connection to the use inside the building.

ENCOURAGED

- Remove boards and other inappropriate materials covering windows and fix broken windows immediately since broken or boarded up windows negatively impact the business district.
- Restore window openings to their original configuration and detail if they have been altered.
- Repair windows before considering replacing them. When replacement windows are necessary, use windows that match the original in size, material, profile, sightlines, configuration, and overall appearance.
- Use storm windows on the exterior that match existing window configurations.
- Retain upper story windows even when vacant. Use curtains or open blinds to conceal vacant spaces that can be seen from the ground level.
- Use a recessed setback if a new interior ceiling must be dropped below the height of the existing window opening, so that the full window opening can be retained without altering the exterior appearance.
- Re-use window hardware including sash lifts and locks. Replace deteriorated or missing parts of windows with new parts that match the old in material, design, color, and texture.
- Stabilize a deteriorated or damaged window until additional work is undertaken, so no further damage can occur to the building.
- Protect and maintain the materials that make up the window frame, sash, muntins, and surrounds through appropriate surface treatments such as cleaning, rust removal, limited paint removal, and re-application of protective coatings.
- Protect the historic glazing when repairing windows. Re-glaze loose or broken window panes, and repair all window parts to working order.
- Make windows weather tight and thermally efficient by re-caulking and replacing or installing weather stripping.

DISCOURAGED

- Changing the size or shape of window openings.

- Removing material that could be repaired or use improper repair techniques.
- Removing or altering windows or window features that define the character of the building.
- Using “fake” historic windows or a modern window design that is incompatible with the historic character or style of the building.
- Using opaque panels, metal, wood, plexi-glass, mirrored, tinted, shaded and/or other materials to replace clear glass windows.
- Using reflective film or dark tinted glass for energy conservation or fade protection.
- Adding shutters to windows.
- Allowing window heating/air conditioning units in windows on the main façade(s).
- Removing a character-defining window that is un-repairable and replace it with a new window that does not convey the same visual appearance.
- Replacing windows because the paint is peeling, there is broken glass, a stuck sash, or high air infiltration as these conditions are not indications that windows are beyond repair.
- Changing the appearance of windows by replacing them with inappropriate materials, finishes, or colors which noticeably change the sash, depth of reveal, and muntin configuration, the reflectivity and color of the glazing (glass), or the appearance of the frame.
- Changing the number, location, size or glazing pattern of windows.
- Cutting new openings or block windows.
- Installing a replacement sash that does not fit the window opening or alter the openings to fit new windows.
- Using incompatible substitute material for replacement parts.
- Using replacement materials that do not match the historic window.
- Replacing windows without sufficient historical, pictorial, and physical documentation.
- Installing new windows that are incompatible with the building's historic appearance or obscure, damage, or destroy character-defining features.
- Inserting new floors or furred-down ceilings on the interior which cut across the glazed areas of windows so that the exterior form and appearance of the windows are changed.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION BRIEF(S):

(9) The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows

(13) The Repair and Thermal Upgrading of Historic Steel Windows

(17) Architectural Character—Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving their Character

(33) The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stained and Leaded Glass

(35) Understanding Old Buildings: The Process of Architectural Investigation

Doors & Entryways

The location and appearance of doors are important character-defining features of historic buildings. Retail storefronts often have recessed entries to provide shelter from the weather, additional display window space and sometimes include the name of the business or address in the floor in tile or terrazzo. Recessed storefronts also emphasize the building entrance. In renovation, building owners are encouraged to retain these entries. If the recessed area has been changed in an earlier remodeling, owners are encouraged to restore the recessed area unless the change has added historic significance to the building. Primary entrance doors should resemble what was originally in place. Solid or residential style doors with small areas of glass are not appropriate for commercial/retail buildings. The typical historic commercial building often had an additional or secondary door on the front or the side to permit access to the upper floors. Compared to the storefront entrance, this second door was slightly more modest in design and usually not recessed as deeply. Secondary doors should also fit into the overall façade without drawing unnecessary attention.

Objective: Preserve original materials or details and the shape and size of original doors and door openings

ENCOURAGED

- Retain original doors and hardware if possible.
- Match the original door in materials and scale to the rest of the façade when replacing.
- Use doors that are compatible with the storefront.

DISCOURAGED

- Moving or covering up existing doorways.
- Adding new doors to the building where there weren't doors or openings before.
- Using standard sized residential type or fake "historic" looking doors decorated with designs, moldings, or window grilles.
- Installing secondary doors that are more prominent than the storefront door.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION BRIEF(S):

(17) Architectural Character—Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving their Character

(35) Understanding Old Buildings: The Process of Architectural Investigation

Materials & Architectural Details

There are four types of traditional materials used to construct commercial buildings: masonry, metal, wood, and glass. Identifying, retaining, and preserving these materials are important in defining the overall historic character of the building. Things such as structurally pigmented glass (Carrara and Vitrolite), brackets, cornices, pressed tin ceilings, door pediments, steps, columns, cast iron facades, enameled metal panels, glass block, storefronts, doors, window sashes, hardware, capitals, window hoods, and stairways as well as details such as tooling, patterns, coatings, finishes and color are constructed of these materials. The following building materials should never be used on the exterior of historic commercial buildings—cedar planks or cedar shake shingles, standing seam metal or asphalt shingled awnings, molded stone, rough cut logs, aluminum slipcovers, vinyl or aluminum siding, enamel coated masonite panels, applied false brick veneer, or decorative concrete block. None of these finishes were used as traditional building materials and they detract from the historic character that McCook is trying to protect. In addition, these materials are not of the same quality as traditional building materials and have not been time tested for durability and longevity. The use of other materials made to either imitate exterior finish materials or used to cover original architectural features is also discouraged. Deteriorated building details and ornament should be repaired rather than replaced whenever possible. If a replacement is necessary, the new material should match the original material in composition, design, color, and texture. Replacement of missing details and ornament should be accurate duplications based upon remaining details and ornament or through historic photographs.

Objective: Building renovation and alterations should restore or repair architectural details including cornices, brickwork, transom, display windows and bulkheads. The materials used to repair or replace damaged or missing details should be long lasting and use materials and detailing that maintains the distinct character and of the downtown.

ENCOURAGED

- Properly documenting all work, repairs and changes to buildings and unobtrusively date the work to guide future research and work.
- Retain historic materials and features as much as possible and undertake adequate measures to assure the protection of those materials and features.
- Stabilize deteriorated or damaged features and surfaces prior to undertaking work so further damage cannot occur.
- Using recognized preservation methods when working with historic building materials.
- Repair damaged features. Only replace extensively deteriorated or missing features when there are limited replacement choices. The new work should match the old in material, design, color, and texture.

- Match brick as closely as possible to the original when replacing missing pieces or when constructing new. Brick should be compatible in texture, scale, and color to the original.
- Evaluate the existing condition of the feature or surface to determine whether more than protection and maintenance are required or if repairs are necessary.
- Protect and maintain exterior building features and surfaces by providing proper drainage so that water does not stand on flat, horizontal surfaces or accumulate in curved decorative elements.
- Uncover hidden details and ornament.
- Remove paint from past work that obscures details and ornament before repainting using appropriate paint removal techniques (**NEVER** sandblast, pellet blast, etc.).
- Repair, fill, caulk, prime and repaint soft, dry, or split areas in wood surfaces.
- Replace broken or missing details and/or ornamentation with quality materials that will last over time and that match the original material in composition, design, color, and texture.

DISCOURAGED

- Covering exposed details and ornament with awnings, slipcovers, or other features.
- Using fake historic details and/or decoration. Materials that attempt to mimic traditional materials. An example would be fiberglass panels that are molded to look like brick.
- Using plastic, vinyl, or other synthetic materials.
- Using aluminum, vinyl or fiberglass siding or roofing materials
- Replacing broken details and/or ornamentation with cheap or inferior materials that will not last over time.
- Removing architectural features that can be stabilized and preserved.
- Using replacement material that does not match the historic features.
- Altering features or surfaces that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building.
- Failing to document work.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION BRIEF(S):

- (1) Cleaning and Water-Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings
- (2) Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings
- (7) The Preservation of Historic Glazed Architectural Terra-Cotta
- (8) Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings: The Appropriateness of Substitute Materials for Resurfacing Historic Wood Frame Buildings
- (12) The Preservation of Historic Pigmented Structural Glass (Vitrolite and Carrara Glass)
- (15) Preservation of Historic Concrete
- (16) The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors
- (17) Architectural Character—Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving their Character
- (22) The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stucco
- (27) The Maintenance and Repair of Architectural Cast Iron
- (35) Understanding Old Buildings: The Process of Architectural Investigation
- (40) Preserving Historic Ceramic Tile Floors
- (42) The Maintenance, Repair and Replacement of Historic Cast Stone

Cornices

Building cornices are constructed of different materials including sheet metal applied over a wood frame, decorative wood molding, brick, or stone. The cornice should be repaired rather than replaced whenever possible. If a replacement is necessary, the new material should match the original material in composition, design, color, and texture. It is possible to repair or replace a cornice if it has been damaged or is no longer there. The original can be duplicated or a replacement similar to the original can be ordered. The new or replacement cornice and missing details and ornament should be based upon historic photographs or existing pieces of the cornice.

Objective: Building renovation and alterations should restore or repair architectural details of cornices. The materials used to repair or replace damaged or missing details should be long lasting and use materials and detailing that maintains the distinct character and harmony of the downtown.

ENCOURAGED

- Repair or replace a cornice that has been damaged or is no longer there
- Paint sheet metal cornices regularly to prevent rust.
- Check the wood support structure for rot or insect damage and, if found, replace the deteriorated portions.
- Paint decorative molded wood cornices regularly to help protect it from deterioration.
- Duplicate the original cornice or find a replacement that is similar to the original using historic photographs and or existing pieces of the cornice that can be used to mold a new one.
- Use quality materials that will last over time and that match the original material in composition, design, color, and texture.

DISCOURAGED

- Replacing a cornice or broken and missing details and/or ornamentation with cheap or inferior materials that will not last over time.
- **DON'T EVER** use sandblasting, soda blasting, shell blasting, bead blasting or pellet blasting painted wood or brick surfaces. It will cause irreparable damage to the stone, brick, metal, or wood.
- Failing to document work.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION BRIEF(S):

(17) Architectural Character—Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving their Character

(35) Understanding Old Buildings: The Process of Architectural Investigation

Color

Painting can be one of the most simple but dramatic improvements that can be made to a building but it must be done with great care. Paint was originally used to highlight the architectural details of a building including the details in the cornice, the storefront, and the upper story window frames. Paint was also used on early buildings to protect the soft-fired brick surface. Brick wall surfaces that have never been painted should be left unpainted. Brick wall surfaces that have been painted, can be maintained and repainted. DO NOT EVER sandblast, soda blast, shell blast, bead blast, pellet blast or use water under pressure on painted wood or brick surfaces. It will cause irreparable damage to the wood, brick or metal. Paint colors should be chosen to be compatible with the architectural color and characteristics of the building as well as adjoining buildings and others on the block. Inappropriate color selection makes a building stand out rather than blend in with the neighboring buildings. Location and size of buildings should also be taken into consideration when selecting colors. Large, plain buildings should use more subtle colors than smaller, more ornate buildings. Also, colors on the south and west sides of a building appear “warmer” than if placed on the north or east sides of a building. Attention should be given to the preparation of surfaces (brick, wood, metal), choice of paint type (oil or latex), and finish (gloss, semi-gloss, or matte). Consult with paint professionals to ensure the appropriateness of your color preferences, surface to be painted and type of paint. The color of buildings should complement the adjacent buildings' colors. The color of brick or other natural building materials should dictate the color family choice. Bricks in the red and brown tones are encouraged. Buildings should use primarily earth tones with light and bright colors use only as minor accents. The accent colors should complement the primary color.

Objective: To encourage a varied but complimentary and appropriate use of color.

ENCOURAGED

- Leave unpainted brick wall surfaces, unpainted.
- Select paint colors that are compatible with the architectural color and characteristics of the building as well as adjoining buildings and others on the block.
- Catalog all of the building pieces that are to be painted. Since each piece may be of different material, it may require a different type of paint and painting technique.
- Pay attention to what the building looks like on sunny and cloudy days and use colors that enhance the look of the building on either day.
- Make repairs to surfaces before starting any work. Replace rotted wood, remove peeling and loose paint, repair masonry mortar joints, clean and repair windows, remove rust from metal, etc.
- Carefully prepare surfaces and apply paint according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Paint brick wall surfaces that have been painted before unless they were previously unpainted.
- Develop a painting schedule. Some times of the year are better than others for painting. Good weather usually ensures a better paint job.

DISCOURAGED

- **DON'T EVER** use sandblasting, soda blasting, shell blasting, bead blasting or pellet blasting painted wood or brick surfaces. It will cause irreparable damage to the stone, brick, metal, or wood.
- Painting brick wall surfaces that have never been painted.
- Selecting paint colors that are inappropriate for the building making it stand out rather than blend in with the neighboring buildings.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION BRIEF(S):

(10) Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork

(17) Architectural Character—Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving their Character

(28) Painting Historic Interiors

(35) Understanding Old Buildings: The Process of Architectural Investigation

(37) Appropriate Methods of Reducing Lead-Paint Hazards in Historic Housing

(38) Removing Graffiti from Historic Masonry

Lighting

Lighting in downtown serves several purposes including security, facilitating vehicular and pedestrian traffic, illumination of signage and façades, highlighting interior merchandise displays and accentuating architectural details of buildings. Compatibility of exterior lighting and lighting fixtures is assessed in terms of design, material, use, size, scale, color, and brightness. When using lighting fixtures in downtown, it is important to consider the level of lighting as well as the scale and overall design of the fixture itself. Exterior lighting should highlight building elements, signs, or other distinctive features rather than attract attention to the light fixture itself. Lighting should provide an even illumination level. Exterior lighting fixtures should be appropriate to the building's architectural style. Building and signage lighting must be indirect, with the light source(s) hidden from direct pedestrian and motorist view. For exterior sign illumination, shaded gooseneck lamps are encouraged.

Objective: Lighting in the downtown should serve to illuminate façades, entrances and signage and provide an adequate level of personal safety while enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the buildings.

ENCOURAGED

- Use lighting fixtures that are appropriate and compatible with the building's period, architectural style, the property, and the district.
- Use lighting that highlights building elements, signs, or other distinctive features at an even illumination level.
- Repair existing fixtures before considering replacement. If replacing fixtures, use the same style and design or appropriate architectural period.

DISCOURAGED

- Using lighting fixtures if inappropriate to the architecture of the building.
- Using obtrusive lighting fixtures or lighting levels that detract from or overly emphasize the building.
- Damaging or concealing any historic architectural features when installing lighting fixtures on a building.
- Using fixtures that replicate an inappropriate architectural period.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION BRIEF(S):

(17) Architectural Character—Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving their Character

(35) Understanding Old Buildings: The Process of Architectural Investigation

Rear Facades, Utility Areas, Garbage Collection, & Mechanical Equipment Screening

The alleys and areas behind Main Street buildings are often overlooked as an important design feature of the district. People avoid them because they are unkempt and unattractive. These spaces are usually used for deliveries or garbage collection and include telephone boxes, cable, electrical boxes, mechanical, air conditioning and heating units. McCook has a few parking areas in the district where the back sides of Main Street buildings are exposed to public view. Often times, the rear façade has been poorly maintained. Windows and doors have been boarded up and the area is generally dirty and unattractive. Electrical and telephone lines may be haphazardly attached. Rear facades need the same care and attention paid to the front façade of the building, not only for preservation reasons, but to support the overall appearance and convenience of the district. It is important to clean up these areas and perform rehab work and maintenance like on other parts of the building. Work with the utility companies to repair, secure and conceal lines and wires and refer to the window and building maintenance sections of these guidelines for more detailed information. Rear entrances are

beneficial for the businesses because they allow direct access to businesses from the parking lot, eliminating the customers need to walk around the block to the front door. With good design and proper maintenance, rear entrances can become attractive and convenient. Before utilizing a back door, business owners should consider whether additional walk-through traffic would help their business. Would it add convenience for their customers? How would they handle their interior traffic circulation, displays, and security? The rear entrance should be clean and well maintained. A small sign, awnings, display windows and planter boxes can improve the appearance. The screening of exterior trash and storage areas, service yards, loading areas, transformers and air conditioning units should use the same materials, color and/or style as the primary building in order to be architecturally compatible with the building it is adjacent to. Exterior trash and storage areas, service yards, loading areas and air conditioning units should be screened from view. Camouflaging air conditioning units is an acceptable screening method.

Objective: To provide attractive rear facades and functional entrances (when necessary or desired). Utility areas, garbage collection sites, and mechanical equipment screening should be designed so that they do not detract from the aesthetic appeal of the district.

ENCOURAGED

- Keep the design of the rear façade and rear entrance simple.
- Keep the design of the rear façade safe for pedestrians and customers. Design for security and safety from criminal activities.
- Remove boards and other inappropriate materials covering window and door openings and restore them to their original configuration and detail if they have been altered.
- Repair windows before considering replacing them.
- Use signage and appropriate lighting to make the rear entrance inviting, attractive and convenient for customers. Make sure that the design and usage of a backdoor entry meets all local codes.
- Keep the rear entrance clean and safe. Pick up trash, pull weeds, and clear snow and ice to prevent hazardous conditions for customers.
- Camouflage or screen air conditioning and heating units and garbage collection areas.

DISCOURAGED

- Allowing the rear entrance to compete with the storefront in importance. The rear entrance should only occupy a small part of the back facade and be simple in character.
- Allowing trash or weeds to accumulate near the backdoor entrance.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION BRIEF(S):

NONE

Storefronts

Commercial storefronts are important to the overall character of a Main Street historic district. The storefront is comprised of large display windows and the building entrance. It is the most prominent feature of a historic commercial building serving as the venue for a store's advertising and merchandising strategy. Typically, a storefront does not extend beyond the first story, but the rest of the building is often related to it visually through a unity of form and detail. Window patterns on the upper floors, cornice elements, and other decorative features should be carefully retained, in addition to the storefront itself. Identifying, retaining, and preserving storefronts and their functional and decorative elements is important to the overall historic character of a commercial building. Such elements include the display windows, signs, doors, transoms, kick plates, and corner posts. Altering these features will most definitely destroy or diminish the overall character of the building. Some storefronts in historic commercial districts are original, while others have been replaced or altered over time when new materials or styles became available. Some of these altered storefronts may have gained historical significance through these changes and should be retained. For buildings where the original storefront has been changed, it is recommended that improvements be made to the existing storefront that respects the historic character of the building which may include replacing the entire storefront with a more appropriate one. In some cases, the storefront

has been covered up with inappropriate materials. Before removing inappropriate coverings, careful research needs to be done to make sure that original materials behind that covering can be saved. If original materials behind the covering cannot be saved, it is best to hire a professional to design a compatible new storefront before any covering is removed or demolition done. New or replacement storefronts should be compatible with the front façade, keeping in mind the scale, proportions, materials, and color of the rest of the façade. The new storefront should be designed to fit in the existing opening, no longer, no smaller, no taller, and have the same or similar look to the original. If the storefront is one of a series of storefronts in the same building, it should relate to the others in scale, proportion, materials, and color. The storefront area of most historic commercial buildings have large panes of fixed glass, called display windows, with smaller transom windows located above entry doors and display windows. Display windows may be framed in wood, copper, bronze, aluminum, or other metal and consist of a single or multiple panes of glass. Storefront transom windows may be fixed or operable and usually consist of a single sheet of glass or are subdivided into multiple panes of clear, colored, stained, prism, or other types of specialty glass. Do not replace storefront glass with dark tinted or mirrored glass because it gives the storefront a “vacant” look and does not allow customers to view merchandise and displays. When restoring a storefront to the original look or similar, look at historic photos and plans. Original materials and details should be preserved if at all possible, or substitutions used that resemble original materials and details. When the use of a ground-floor space changes, sometimes the storefront and display windows no longer have a functional purpose. Even if the storefront or display windows no longer have a functional purpose, they should not be removed or covered-up. The storefront and display windows are still character-defining elements of the building facade and should be retained. Blinds, shades, window painting, or gilding could be applied to provide the desired “small windows,” or display boxes could be constructed inside the existing windows to focus attention on small, valuable objects.

Transom windows are the smaller windows above the storefront display windows. They were designed to let in light and to improve ventilation. Often transom windows still exist but are covered with building materials on the outside and are hidden above dropped ceilings on the inside. Transom windows should be retained and repaired in the process of rehabilitation. Consult with a local and knowledgeable stained glass professional for assistance and suggestions for repair, replacement, removal, and re-installation. Sometimes air conditioning units are installed in transom windows. If possible, air conditioners should be removed and the transom window replaced. If air conditioning units cannot be removed, their exterior grills should be painted to blend in with the storefront and a drip tube installed so that condensation does not drip on pedestrians or cause water damage to the building facade.

The storefront **bulkhead** is located between the sidewalk and the large storefront window. Where the bulkhead has been replaced with an inappropriate material, like wood shingles, fake stone, or fake brick, it should be redesigned to fit the building. Where the bulkhead has been removed, it should be reconstructed to maintain proper storefront proportions.

Objective: Maintain commercial storefronts that contribute to the overall character of a Main Street historic district and provide identity to businesses in the district.

ENCOURAGED

- Retain and repair the storefront rather than replace or alter it.
- Use the same materials and method of construction if a replacement storefront is necessary.
- Identify, retain, and preserve storefronts and their functional and decorative features such as display windows, signs, doors, transoms, kick plates, and corner posts.
- Protect and maintain masonry, wood, and architectural metals using appropriate treatments such as cleaning, rust removal, limited paint removal, and reapplication of protective coating systems.
- Protect storefronts against arson and vandalism before work begins. Board up openings, install locks and alarm systems.
- Evaluate the existing condition of storefront materials to determine whether maintenance or repair is required.
- Remove inappropriate, non-historic cladding, false pent roofs, and other alterations that obscure the storefront.
- Replace in kind deteriorated or missing parts of storefronts where there are surviving prototypes such as transoms, kick plates, pilasters, or signs. The new work should match the old in materials, design, color, and texture; and be unobtrusively dated to guide future research and treatment. Use pictorial documentation and/or physical evidence to re-create the historic feature.

DISCOURAGED

- Changing the storefront so that it appears residential in character.
- Using coach lanterns, pent awnings, wood shakes, inoperable shutters, and small-paned windows on the storefront.
- Removing historic material such as wood, cast iron, terra cotta, carrara glass, and brick.
- Changing the location of a storefront's entrance.
- Replacing an existing storefront without considering if it contributes to the character of the building and whether the materials, the scale, proportion, color, details, and ornamentation are compatible with those of the rest of the façade.
- Creating a false historical appearance or use historically incorrect storefront replacements because the replaced storefront is based on insufficient historical, pictorial, and physical documentation.
- Replacing a deteriorated storefront with a new storefront that does not convey the same visual appearance or is incompatible in size, scale, material, and color.
- Using opaque panels, metal, wood, plexi-glass, mirrored, tinted, shaded and/or other materials to replace clear glass storefront display windows.
- Removing material that can be repaired or use improper repair techniques.
- Ignoring ongoing maintenance of the storefront which will ensure longevity of materials and structure.
- Allowing entry into the building through unsecured or broken windows and doors so that interior features and finishes are damaged by exposure to weather or vandalism.
- Using replacement material that does not match the historic storefront feature or use a substitute material for the replacement parts that does not convey the same visual appearance as the surviving parts of the storefront or that is physically or chemically incompatible.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION BRIEF(S):

(11) Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts

(17) Architectural Character—Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving their Character

(35) Understanding Old Buildings: The Process of Architectural Investigation

(40) Preserving Historic Ceramic Tile Floors

(42) The Maintenance, Repair and Replacement of Historic Cast Stone

Cleaning & Exterior Maintenance

Cleaning and maintaining the exterior of a building is one way to freshen it up and to keep it in good condition. Always consult with a historic preservation professional who can help you inspect the surface and determine the safest, most efficient method of cleaning. DO NOT EVER sandblast, soda blast, shell blast, bead blast, pellet blast or use water under pressure on painted wood or brick surfaces. It will cause irreparable damage to the stone, brick, metal, or wood. It is most important to understand how building materials will interact, physically and chemically with the cleaner. Evaluate the effectiveness and safety of the cleaning method by allowing a test patch to weather for several months. Problems with that type of cleaning method will show during this period. After the test patch has been completed, examine the masonry. Note whether there are pock marks, whether edges are too rounded or whether the face of the masonry rubs off when you touch it. Some masonry may be too soft to clean. Cleaning with soap, water, and a soft bristle brush sounds easy, and it can be the most economical way to clean a dirty building. But do watch for potential problems. Ask about the mineral composition of McCook's water supply. Some minerals could leave stains on your building. Consider the time of year and the weather when you decide to clean your building. Avoid wet cleaning operations when a danger of frost may exist. Pay attention to Nebraska's freeze dates, typically October through April. Make sure that all entrances, windows and window wells are adequately protected against water and chemical seepage during cleaning. If you are doing more than one maintenance task on the exterior of the building, plan a work schedule. Some work should be done before cleaning; other work is best done afterward. For example, it is usually best to caulk around windows before the cleaning process (to keep water out of the joints), but to paint them after (to ensure that the paint is not disturbed during the cleaning. The facade may only need to be cleaned and painted; or, if constructed of masonry, it may have mortar joints that need to be re-

pointed. In some cases, holes left by the removal of signs or other objects may need to be filled. Repairing and maintaining the exterior of a building is essential to keeping it in good condition. Always consult with a historic preservation professional who can help you inspect the exterior of the building and determine the appropriate course of repair or maintenance. All buildings require periodic maintenance to ensure their longevity. Every aspect of a downtown commercial building should be examined periodically for maintenance needs. Frequent maintenance includes washing of windows, sweeping sidewalks, and eliminating weeds and litter. More complex maintenance includes keeping the building repaired and painted. DO NOT EVER sandblast, soda blast, shell blast, bead blast, pellet blast or use water under pressure on painted wood or brick surfaces. It will cause irreparable damage to the stone, brick, metal, or wood. Re-pointing is the means of replacing the mortar between the bricks of a building. It is important to replace deteriorated mortar between bricks using the appropriate technique for historic brick and other building materials. New mortar should match the existing mortar in composition, hardness, and profile. It is best to consult a professional brick mason when approaching this type of maintenance on your building. Inappropriate re-pointing can destroy the exterior structure of the building.

Objective: To protect and maintain the exterior of the building in order to extend the lifespan of the building.

ENCOURAGED

- Use recognized preservation methods when working with historic building materials.
- Stabilize deteriorated or damaged features and surfaces prior to undertaking work.
- Clean masonry only when necessary with the gentlest method possible.
- Clean architectural metals, to remove corrosion prior to repainting or applying protective coatings.
- Regularly inspect painted masonry, wood surfaces and other architectural features to determine whether repainting is necessary or if cleaning and/or maintenance is all that is required.
- Remove damaged or deteriorated paint no further than the next sound layer using the gentlest method possible.
- Retain paint and coatings that help protect wood features from moisture and ultraviolet light.
- Only use chemical strippers to supplement other methods such as hand scraping and hand sanding.
- Repaint with colors that are appropriate to character of the building and district.
- Follow manufacturers' product and application instructions when painting exterior masonry, woodwork or metal features.
- Apply appropriate paint or other coating systems after cleaning in order to decrease the corrosion rate of metals or alloys.
- Use the gentlest cleaning methods for cast iron, wrought iron, and steel when removing paint build up and corrosion.
- Identify the type of metal prior to cleaning, and test to assure the gentlest cleaning method is selected or determine that cleaning is inappropriate for that metal.
- Use appropriate cleaning techniques for soft metals such as lead, tin, copper, terne plate, and zinc with because their finishes can be easily damaged by inappropriate treatments.
- Use recognized preservation methods when working with historic building materials.
- Stabilize deteriorated or damaged features and surfaces prior to undertaking work.
- Evaluate architectural features to determine whether maintenance or repairs are necessary.
- Evaluate and treat the causes of mortar joint deterioration such as leaking roofs or gutters, differential settlement of the building, capillary action, or extreme weather exposure.
- Repair masonry walls and other features by re-pointing the mortar joints where there is evidence of disintegrating mortar, cracks in mortar joints, loose bricks, damp walls, or damaged plasterwork.
- Duplicate old mortar in strength, composition, color, texture, width and in joint profile.
- Remove deteriorated mortar by carefully hand-raking the joints to avoid damaging the masonry Use only hand tools to remove deteriorated mortar from joints prior to re-pointing.
- Repair stucco by removing the damaged material and patching with new stucco that duplicates the old in strength, composition, color, and texture.
- Only apply surface treatments such as water-repellent coatings to masonry after re-pointing and only if masonry repairs have failed to stop water penetration problems.
- Identify, evaluate, and treat the causes of building material deterioration, including faulty flashing, leaking gutters, cracks and holes in siding, deteriorated caulking in joints and seams, plant material growing too close to wood surfaces, or insect or fungus infestation.
- Pay attention to pedestrian use or new access patterns so that architectural metal features are not subject to damage by use or inappropriate maintenance such as salting adjacent sidewalks.

DISCOURAGED

- Using cleaning methods which alter or damage the historic color, texture, and finish of the material.
- Using untested techniques, chemicals, or untrained personnel.
- Painting new or existing unpainted bare brick; if the brick has been painted in the past, do not remove the paint—maintain it as a painted surface.
- Removing paint that is firmly adhering to, and thus protecting surfaces.
- Using metal brushes to clean with as they can damage mortar and masonry.
- Using chemical products or caustic solutions that will damage material surfaces, such as using acid on limestone or marble, or that leave a chemical residue.
- Doing full scale surface cleaning until after testing whether or not the cleaning method is appropriate. Tests should be observed over a sufficient period of time so both the immediate and the long range effects are known.
- Stripping paint or other coatings to reveal bare wood, thus exposing historically coated surfaces to the effects of accelerated weathering.
- Using paint removal methods like propane or butane torches on wood; using thermal devices improperly will scorch the wood.
- Using high pressure water cleaning, blasting with dry or wet grit, sand, or other abrasives because it destroys the hard fired finish on brick and damages mortar, stone and other masonry; these methods of cleaning permanently erode the surface and accelerate deterioration of the material.
- Repainting with colors that are not historically appropriate to the building and district.
- Applying water-repellent coatings to masonry.
- Using a cleaning method that involves water or liquid chemical solutions when there is any possibility of freezing temperatures. Avoid cleaning and paint removal when frost is expected. The best time of the year to undertake projects such as this is in the late spring through summer.
- Forgetting to neutralize the wood thoroughly after using chemicals so that new paint can adhere.
- Using sandblasting or water blasting to remove paint from wood as it will damage wood.
- Allowing detachable wood features to soak too long in a caustic solution causing the wood grain to become raised and the surface roughened.
- Exposing metal surfaces that were intended to be protected from the environment.
- Applying paint or other coatings to metals such as copper, bronze, or stainless steel that were meant to be exposed.
- Removing the patina of historic metal because it is a protective coating on some metals, such as bronze or copper, and is a significant historic exterior finish.
- Cleaning soft metals such as lead, tin, copper, terne plate, and zinc with high pressure water cleaning or blasting with dry or wet grit, sand, or other abrasives which will wear away the surface of the metal.
- Using high pressure water cleaning or blasting with dry or wet grit, sand, or other abrasive methods to clean cast iron, wrought iron or steel.
- Letting cleaning solution runoff enter the storm drain or soak into the ground.
- Altering masonry features which are important in defining the overall architectural or historic character of the building.
- Applying waterproof, water repellent, or non-historic coatings to brick as a substitute for re-pointing and masonry repairs because it will change the appearance of historic masonry and accelerate its deterioration.
- Using replacement material that does not match the historic masonry feature.
- Altering features which are important in defining the overall historic character of the building.
- Placing incompatible metals together without providing a reliable separation material; such incompatibility can result in galvanic corrosion of the less noble metal (ie. copper will corrode cast iron, steel, tin, and aluminum).
- Using electric saws or hammers to remove deteriorated mortar from joints.
- Re-pointing joints with mortar of high portland cement content because it creates a bond that is stronger than the historic material and can cause damage as a result of the differing coefficient of expansion and the differing porosity of the material and the mortar.
- Re-pointing with a synthetic caulking compound.
- Using a "scrub" coating technique to re-point mortar joints.
- Removing sound stucco or repair with new stucco that is stronger than the historic material or does not convey the same visual appearance.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION BRIEF(S):

- (6) Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings
- (39) Holding the Line: Controlling Unwanted Moisture in Historic Buildings
- (47) Maintaining the Exterior of Small and Medium Size Historic Buildings

Accessibility

Modifications to historic buildings are often required so that they will be in compliance with current accessibility code requirements. Any proposed design modifications need to be assessed for negative impact on a building's historic character and/or character-defining features.

Objective: Providing access to historic buildings through modifications with the least impact on the historic resource.

ENCOURAGED

- Consider the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provisions for alternative ways of accessing historic buildings in cases where the proposed work would damage or destroy a building's character-defining spaces or elements.
- Comply with barrier-free access requirements while protecting the character-defining spaces, features, and finishes of the building.
- Include architecturally sensitive accessibility modifications during a storefront rehabilitation.
- Identify the building's character-defining spaces, features, and finishes so that accessibility code-required work will not result in their damage or loss.
- Work with local disability groups, access specialists, and historic preservation specialists to determine the most appropriate solution to access problems.
- Design new or additional means of access that are compatible with the historic building and its setting.

DISCOURAGED

- Designing modifications for accessibility without consideration of the impact on the building.
- Altering, obscure, radically change, damage, or destroy character-defining features of the building while attempting to comply with accessibility requirements.
- Making changes to the building without first seeking expert advice from access specialists and historic preservation professionals to determine appropriate solutions.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION BRIEF(S):

- (32) Making Historic Properties Accessible

Building Safety and Security

When planning for a building rehabilitation project, it is necessary to consider the impact that current building health and safety codes will have on the building. Though not directly related to historic preservation, it is important that any proposed projects do not interfere with the building's historic character. Some historic building materials contain toxic substances that are potentially hazardous to building occupants. Investigation and analysis of the materials and the potential abatement should be done by experienced professionals.

Objective: Provide for the health, safety and well-being of building users while not disturbing important character defining elements of the historic building.

ENCOURAGED

- Identify the building's character-defining spaces, features, and finishes so that code-required work will not result in their damage or loss.
- Comply with health and safety codes so that character-defining spaces, features, and finishes are preserved.
- Preserve historic stairways and elevators so that they meet health and safety codes and are not damaged or obscured. Add new stairways or elevators in a manner that does not detract from interior architectural features.
- Remove toxic building materials only after thorough testing has been conducted and only after less invasive abatement methods have been shown to be inadequate.
- Work with local code officials to find equivalent materials, equipment, or finishes that can be used to meet code so that unnecessary or character damaging alterations can be avoided.
- Ensure that workers are certified to abate hazardous materials and provide workers with appropriate personal protective equipment for hazards found in the building.
- Install sensitively designed fire suppression systems so that they do not damage or obscure historic interior features and finishes.
- Use architecturally inconspicuous exterior building additions when required to build a code-required stairway or elevator that cannot be accommodated within the historic building.

DISCOURAGED

- Making code-required alterations to a building or site before identifying the character-defining spaces, features, or finishes that should be preserved.
- Altering, damage, or destroy character-defining spaces, features, and finishes when modifying a building or site to comply with safety codes.
- Radically changing, damaging, or destroying character-defining spaces, features, or finishes when adding a new code-required stairway or elevator.
- Destroying historic interior features and finishes without careful testing and without consideration to less invasive abatement methods.
- Removing or abating unhealthy or unsafe building materials or finishes without taking personal and environmental safety precautions.
- Making changes to historic buildings without first exploring equivalent materials, equipment, or finishes that can be used to meet code so that unnecessary or character damaging alterations can be avoided.
- Damaging, obscuring or altering historic stairways and elevators or the adjacent spaces when trying to meet code requirements.
- Using fire-retardant coatings or sheathing if it damages or obscures character-defining features.
- Constructing a new addition to accommodate code-required stairs and elevators on character-defining elevations highly visible from the street or where it obscures, damages, or destroys character-defining features.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION BRIEF(S):

(17) Architectural Character—Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving their Character

(35) Understanding Old Buildings: The Process of Architectural Investigation

Energy Efficiency

Energy efficiency improvements as well as accessibility, health, and safety requirements are not directly related to historic preservation, but these types of improvements should be assessed for their potential impact on a historic building. It is important that any proposed projects do not interfere with the building's historic character. Some existing features can play an energy-conserving role. Therefore, prior to retrofitting historic buildings for energy efficiency, the first step should always be to identify and evaluate existing historic features to assess their inherent energy-conserving potential.

Traditional commercial buildings have some basic characteristics that help save energy. Relatively little of the building is exposed. Sides are usually covered (and insulated) by adjacent buildings. Above the storefront, the windows tend to be small and widely spaced. Compare this to the typical facade of a new building. In buildings with several floors, the upper

stories trap and use heat rising from the lower floors. Despite some of the characteristics that help save energy in old commercial buildings, they also have some energy problems. In many cases, old windows and doors have not been maintained. Consequently, they leak air and moisture. Un-insulated flat roofs lose much usable heat during the winter. Large storefront windows lose heat in the winter and let in hot air during the summer and old heating systems are often inefficient and outdated.

Objective: Making energy efficient improvements while not disturbing important character defining elements of the historic building.

ENCOURAGED

- Install insulating material in attics and in unheated cellars and crawlspaces to increase the efficiency of the existing mechanical systems. Use materials with a vapor barrier to prevent unwanted moisture.
- Utilize the inherent energy conserving features of a building by maintaining windows and doors. Make sure that they seal as tightly as possible so that when closed, should not leak air or moisture.
- Use insulated glass to reduce the energy inefficiency of a storefront window.
- Install interior storm windows on upper floors with air-tight gaskets, ventilating holes, and/or removable clips to insure proper maintenance and to avoid condensation damage to historic windows.
- Use interior shades or blinds.
- Repair all windows and doors so that all their parts fit together tightly.
- Weather-strip and caulk all window and door openings.
- Re-glaze all loose or broken window panes.
- Use awnings or canopies above storefronts to help with energy efficiency. Operable awnings can be extended in the summer to shade the storefront and retracted in winter to allow sunlight into the store.
- Locate heat vents near storefront windows to minimize the discomfort of winter heat loss and help prevent condensation on the glass.
- Conceal metal duct systems or have them designed so that they blend with the building's interior and do not cover the transom windows.

DISCOURAGED

- Using tinted, shaded, or opaque glass in storefront windows.
- Installing insulating material on the inside of masonry walls if there are character-defining interior features such as molding around the windows or other interior architectural detailing.
- Applying insulating material where there is a high moisture content in wall cavities.
- Installing exterior storm windows which damage or obscure the windows and frames.
- Removing historic shading devices. Instead, keep them in an operable condition.
- Replacing historic multi-paned sash with a new thermal sash with false muntins.
- Installing interior storm windows that allow moisture to accumulate and damage the window.
- Installing new exterior storm windows that are inappropriate in size or color.
- Replacing windows or transoms with fixed thermal glazing.
- Removing historic interior features that play an energy conserving role.
- Replacing existing mechanical systems that could be repaired for continued use.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION BRIEF(S):

(3) Conserving Energy in Historic Buildings

(24) Heating, Ventilating, and Cooling Historic Buildings: Problems and Recommended Approaches

Infill/New Construction

Infill construction should reflect some of the detailing of surrounding buildings in window shape, cornice lines and brick work. *Constructing new buildings to fill vacant lots in the downtown district is encouraged, however design of new construction is challenging in a district comprised of historic buildings. The new building's appearance must be sensitive to the character of and designed to be compatible with surrounding buildings. Any proposed new infill building designs need to be assessed for negative impact on the character of the district and the surrounding buildings. The infill façade should not look like a building of another architectural era not found in the district or community. It should not pretend to look historic but should contain similar qualities that blend in with the surrounding buildings. Too often, false Colonial or Victorian details are added to a new building in an attempt to make it blend in with older surroundings. This approach detracts from the district's character by compromising what is authentic and historic. Any new building constructed should strive for craftsmanship and quality design that is compatible with the surrounding buildings. Like with new infill building construction, the design for additions to historic buildings is equally challenging. The appearance of the addition to a building must be sensitive to that building's historic character. Any proposed design needs to be assessed for negative impact on the character of the historic building. It should not pretend to look historic but should contain similar qualities that blend in with the existing building. The building addition should strive for craftsmanship and quality design that is compatible with the existing building. New buildings and new building additions should be designed with the following qualities in mind:*

*The **HEIGHT** of an infill building should be in proportion to its width and should relate to the height and width of surrounding buildings. Avoid new construction that greatly varies in height from adjacent buildings. The height of many adjoining buildings may be similar. If considering an infill building, this height should be a standard to follow. In instances where there is a slight variance of heights, the building should be within the range of building heights on the block. Many corner buildings are higher, and tend to dominate the block. They serve as anchor buildings, a pattern that should be observed in new construction and infill. New buildings constructed in the middle of the block should fill the entire space (height and width). Avoid constructing a single story building between two multi-story buildings.*

New construction and infill buildings should maintain the **SETBACK** of facades along the sidewalk edge. Exceptions may be granted if the setback is pedestrian-oriented and contributes to the quality and character of the streetscape. An example would be for outdoor dining. In instances where there are parking areas abutting the street, the sidewalk edge must be delineated with pillars and fencing that is consistent with the City of Hopkins streetscape theme.

*The **WIDTH** of an infill building should correspond with the widths of the surrounding buildings. If the open space in the middle of the block is large, the building should be broken into a number of smaller bays to maintain consistency throughout the block face. The lot width in the district varies. In some cases a building may occupy more than one lot. Consideration should be given to the width of adjoining buildings to achieve uniform appearance.*

*The **PROPORTION and SIZE** of window and door openings should be similar to neighboring buildings. To enhance merchandise displays, downtown buildings were designed so the storefront windows were wide with little or no wall space between them. Addition of in-fill panels not made of glass is discouraged. Common heights of all horizontal elements such as windows, and lintels, canopies, awnings, and signs should be maintained throughout the district.*

*The **COMPOSITION** of a building is the organization of its parts. The composition of the infill building should be similar to neighboring buildings.*

*The **RHYTHM** of a series of buildings is the spacing and location of windows, doors and other openings. Rooflines should mimic the separate yet complementary rhythm of historic commercial buildings.*

*Because the majority of buildings in downtown McCook are faced in brick or stone, all new infill construction should use brick **BUILDING MATERIALS**. Building materials used should be of similar quality, color, texture, dimension, and complement the district. Don't use false Colonial or false Victorian details or features.*

Objectives: Infill/new construction should complement the existing pattern of buildings. Infill/new construction should maintain consistency with existing building heights, setback, width, proportion and size of openings, rhythm, composition, and building materials.

ENCOURAGED

- Make attempts to locate functions and services required for the new use in non-character-defining interior spaces rather than constructing a new addition to the building.
- Encourage construction of new buildings on vacant lots downtown.
- Build a new addition so that there is the least possible loss of historic materials and character-defining features are not obscured, damaged, or destroyed.
- Design the building addition so that it makes clear what is historic and what is new.
- Consider the design for an attached exterior addition in terms of its relationship to the historic building as well as the historic district.
- Place a new addition on a non-character-defining elevation and limit the size and scale in relationship to the historic building.
- Design rooftop additions that are set back from the parapet and cannot be seen from the street level.
- Encourage infill buildings to reflect the characteristic rhythm of the facades along the street. If the site is large, the building should be divided into a number of small bays.
- Respect the proportion (the relationship between height and width) of existing facades.
- Make sure the setback is consistent with that of its neighboring buildings.
- Make sure the infill building design has window and door spacing consistent with the rest of the block.
- Make sure the size and proportion of window and door openings are similar to those on surrounding facades.
- Consider the ratio of window area to solid wall for the facade as a whole.
- Use paint colors or materials that complement adjacent facades.

DISCOURAGED

- Expanding the size of the historic building by constructing a new addition when the new use could be met by altering non-character-defining interior spaces.
- Building a new addition where there will be a loss of historic materials and character-defining features are obscured, damaged, or destroyed or that will result in the decrease of or loss of the historic character of the building including its design, materials, workmanship, location, or setting.
- Duplicating the exact form, material, style, and detailing of the historic building in a new addition so that the new work appears to be part of the historic building.
- Imitating a historic style or period of architecture in a new addition or infill building or use false Colonial or Victorian details.
- Building a rooftop addition so that the historic appearance of the building is radically changed.
- Using colors or materials that do not complement adjacent facades.

APPLICABLE PRESERVATION BRIEF(S):

(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

(35) Understanding Old Buildings: The Process of Architectural Investigation

Resources

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- (1) Cleaning and Water-Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings
- (2) Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings
- (3) Conserving Energy in Historic Buildings
- (4) Roofing for Historic Buildings
- (6) Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings
- (7) The Preservation of Historic Glazed Architectural Terra-Cotta
- (8) Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings: The Appropriateness of Substitute Materials for Resurfacing Historic Wood Frame Buildings
- (9) The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows
- (10) Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork
- (11) Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts
- (12) The Preservation of Historic Pigmented Structural Glass (Vitrolite and Carrara Glass)
- (13) The Repair and Thermal Upgrading of Historic Steel Windows
- (14) New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns
- (15) Preservation of Historic Concrete
- (16) The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors
- (17) Architectural Character—Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving their Character

- (18) Rehabilitating Interiors in Historic Buildings – Identifying Character-Defining Elements
- (21) Repairing Historic Flat Plaster—Walls and Ceilings
- (22) The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stucco
- (23) Preserving Historic Ornamental Plaster
- (24) Heating, Ventilating, and Cooling Historic Buildings: Problems and Recommended Approaches
- (25) The Preservation of Historic Signs
- (27) The Maintenance and Repair of Architectural Cast Iron
- (28) Painting Historic Interiors
- (31) Mothballing Historic Buildings
- (32) Making Historic Properties Accessible
- (33) The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stained and Leaded Glass
- (35) Understanding Old Buildings: The Process of Architectural Investigation
- (37) Appropriate Methods of Reducing Lead-Paint Hazards in Historic Housing
- (38) Removing Graffiti from Historic Masonry
- (39) Holding the Line: Controlling Unwanted Moisture in Historic Buildings
- (40) Preserving Historic Ceramic Tile Floors
- (42) The Maintenance, Repair and Replacement of Historic Cast Stone
- (44) The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings: Repair, Replacement and New Design
- (46) The Preservation and Reuse of Historic Gas Stations
- (47) Maintaining the Exterior of Small and Medium Size Historic Buildings