

Downtown Design Guidelines City of Monroe, Washington



December 18, 2008 Draft #1a

Back of Outside Cover

Downtown Design Guidelines

The City of Monroe, Washington

Credits

City of Monroe

City Council

Planning Commission

Chamber of Commerce

Monroe Historical Society

Special Thanks

A special thank you to all the residents, property owners, tenants and interested persons who participated in the workshops and public hearings during the downtown master plan and design guidelines process.

Consultants

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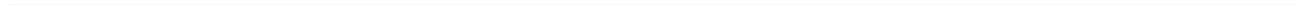
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Introduction

This document presents Design Guidelines for Downtown Monroe. Downtown has been a significant educational, cultural and commercial center for over 150 years, and historic buildings found there remain tangible reminders of the history of Monroe and Snohomish County. These guidelines provide a means of preserving the historic resources of downtown while accommodating compatible development.

This document establishes guidelines for determining the appropriateness of improvements that may be planned within the area. An introductory section provides a general overview of the Design Guidelines framework, including a description of how to utilize the Design Guidelines, understand the format of the document and how to determine which Design Guidelines are relevant for any given project. The Design Guidelines are written to apply to commercial building types.

What are Design Guidelines?

Design Guidelines convey general policies about alterations to existing structures, additions, new construction and site work. The Design Guidelines define a range of appropriate responses to a variety of specific design issues.

Why have Design Guidelines?

Design Guidelines help establish a common understanding of preservation principles and standards. Retaining the historic character that exists downtown is an important goal to Monroe. The historic resources of Monroe are finite and vulnerable to inappropriate alteration and demolition.

Who uses the Design Guidelines?

These Design Guidelines have been written for use by the City of Monroe or a review authority established by the City. They are also intended for use by property owners in making decisions about proposed rehabilitation and new construction projects that will be sensitive to the historic character of downtown.

When to use the Design Guidelines

The Design Guidelines should be consulted for projects which may affect the integrity of historic resources. While ordinary repair and maintenance are encouraged, seemingly minor alterations to a historic structure, such as enclosing a storefront or changing windows, can have a dramatic effect on the visual character of a historic structure and therefore, are of concern. The following is a list of common changes that can have a significant impact on the integrity of a historic structure:

- Construction of a new addition
- Alteration or restoration of exterior features of a historic building
- Removal or demolition, in whole or in part, of a historic building
- Alteration or restoration of a storefront
- Application of a new exterior siding material
- Addition of a new window or door openings
- Creation of a driveway or a parking area
- Construction or addition of a parking deck
- Application of architectural features and other miscellaneous modifications, such as cornices and bulkheads.

This list is **not** all inclusive, but is indicative of the types of changes to which these Design Guidelines apply. For questions regarding permits and the applicability of these guidelines, please contact the Community Development Department.

Do Design Guidelines dictate taste?

The Design Guidelines reflect basic approaches to design that will help preserve the historic integrity of downtown. They do not dictate style, but they do require compatibility with the historic character. They also reflect the values of the community, including their goals to preserve the historic core of Downtown Monroe and historically significant buildings outside of downtown.

Where do the Design Guidelines Apply?

The Design Guidelines apply to properties in the Downtown Monroe and other structures of historic importance outside the downtown area.



Current property lines and building footprints within the Downtown Boundary Line.

Does your Property have Historic Significance?

With the understanding that a historic district will potentially be established these following terms will apply to properties within the downtown area.

Contributing Property. A building, site, structure, work of art or object that adds to the aesthetic qualities or historic values for which a historic area is significant because it possesses historic integrity reflecting the downtown's character or is independently significant. Preservation of key defining features is the goal.

Non-contributing Property. A building, site, structure, work of art or object that does not add to the aesthetic qualities or historic values for which the downtown is significant because it does not possess historic integrity reflecting the downtown's character and is not independently significant. Preservation of features on the building itself is not a consideration, but the results of alteration or demolition should be compatible with the historic context.

How the Guidelines Apply

		Chapters to Use:								
		Introduction	Chapter 1: Basic Principles of Historic Preservation	Chapter 2: History & Design Character of Downtown	Chapter 3: Rehabilitation of Historic Properties	Chapter 4: Design Guidelines for New Construction	Chapter 5: Parking Facilities	Chapter 6: Public Streetscape	Chapter 7: General Design Guidelines	Chapter 8: Sign Design Guidelines
Type of Work	Work on a “contributing property” in Downtown.	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
	Work on a “non-contributing” property in Downtown.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
	Work on a “new construction project” in Downtown.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X

This chart illustrates how the individual chapters of the guidelines apply to specific property types. See the appendix for an explanation of the terms used in the “type of work” column. To determine if a property is potentially contributing, please call the Community Development Department.

X: *This chapter applies to the project.*

Structure of Design Guidelines

Each design guideline presented includes several components that constitute the criteria upon which design review decisions will be made.

Design Element

The guidelines are grouped into pertinent design element categories (e.g., site planning, building materials, storefronts).

Policy Statement

Each design element category has a policy statement that explains Monroe's basic approach to the treatment of that topic. In cases where the detailed Design Guidelines do not appear to address a situation, the general policy statement shall serve as the basis for determining appropriateness.

Design Guidelines

Specific Design Guidelines are numbered in order to reference them during the design review process. The guidelines are **not** numbered in order of importance.

Additional Information

Supplementary information is listed as bulleted (•) statements, and may include additional requirements, or an expanded explanation of the guideline.

Illustrations

Design Guidelines may be accompanied by a photograph and/or illustration that supports the guideline language. Illustrations are not included for all guidelines.

Design Element	→	Windows and Doors	
Policy Statement	→	Original windows and doors are important features that help convey the character of a building. Original elements should be preserved, when feasible.	
Design Guideline	→	3.11 Maintain historic storefront openings.	
Additional Information	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The size and shape of the storefront are important characteristics that contribute to the integrity of a historic commercial building. Avoid altering the shapes of these features.• If these elements have already been altered, consider restoring them if their original condition can be determined.	
Illustration	→		

Structure of the Design Guidelines.

1

Basic Principles of Historic Preservation

This chapter addresses the role of preservation in the community including a discussion of general principles and benefits of preservation.

The Design Guidelines incorporate principles from *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, which are general rehabilitation guidelines administered by the National Park Service. These national standards are policies that normally serve as a basis for more detailed design guidelines.



Retaining the historic character that exists downtown is an important goal that design guidelines promote through preservation of the historic, cultural and architectural resources that reflect the history of Downtown Monroe.



Distinguishing features should be retained.

The Basic Principles for Preservation in Downtown Monroe

While the Design Guidelines will provide direction for specific design issues, some basic principles of preservation will form the foundation for them. The following preservation principles should apply:

1. Retention of Distinguishing Features:

Every building possesses some components that contribute to its architectural character. During restoration or rehabilitative work, an effort should be made to retain these original features.

2. Avoidance of Imitative Historic Features for which there is No Historic Basis:

Some owners tend to make alterations to a building that have no foundation in history; they try to make the building appear to be older than it actually is. Ideally, the owner should be able to prove that the proposed alteration actually existed on the building at some previous time.

3. The Retention of Later Additions:

Most buildings have been altered periodically. Sometimes a porch or sun room has been added and these changes are evidence of the building's history. Changes such as these may be significant in their own right if they represent substantial changes to the historic or architectural character of the building in a specific period in time.

4. Crafted Elements Should be Preserved:

Many older structures possess characteristics that would be difficult or impossible to reproduce today. These elements include such things as carved mantels, cast iron work, terra cotta ornaments and delicate plaster decorations. Elements like these give character to a historic building and distinguish it from newer buildings.

5. Repair, Don't Replace:

Historic or original building elements should be retained whenever possible. While some replacement materials may closely match the original, newer elements generally cause a loss of historic value.

6. Careful Cleaning Methods:

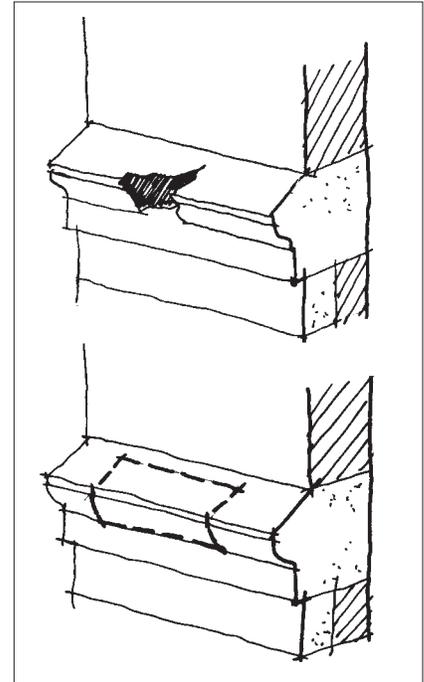
Harsh cleaning methods for wood and masonry are discouraged. These methods can have an adverse effect on the visual qualities of the surface and thereby affect the overall appearance of a building.

7. Compatible Additions and Construction:

Compatible designs for new structures and additions is encouraged. New buildings within downtown should reflect the architecture of their time. Therefore, new construction should not attempt to imitate or copy old architecture. New buildings should relate to existing buildings in terms of height, mass, lot placement, ratio of solids to voids and materials.

8. Reversibility:

All proposed alterations should be reversible. This means that new additions should be made so that the original fabric of the structure is not altered.



Repair don't replace original building elements.

Concept of “Integrity”

Buildings with integrity have a sufficient percentage of structure exhibiting characteristics intact. The majority of the building’s structural system and its materials should date from that time and its key character-defining features also should remain intact. Key features may include architectural details, materials and overall mass and form of the building. It is these key elements that allow a building to be recognized as a product of its time.

Contributing Property

Contributing properties form the foundation of the downtown, these properties should be identified in a future survey conducted by the city. Several chapters of the Design Guidelines are devoted to contributing properties as shown on the chart on page 5.

Often, a property may also be considered contributing if it:

- Has character, interest or value as part of the local, regional, state or national history, heritage or culture;
- Is the site of a significant historic event;
- Is identified with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the local, regional, state or national culture and history;
- Exemplifies the cultural, economic, social or historic heritage of the community;
- Represents a distinctive architectural era;
- Embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen;
- Includes the work of an architect, engineer or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the community;
- Embodies elements of architectural or engineering design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represents a significant architectural innovation or which is unique.

Non-Contributing Property

Non-Contributing properties will also be addressed in the Design Guidelines. Although these properties do not contribute to the historic significance of downtown, they are located within the downtown area.

Alterations

Many historic structures have experienced alterations as tastes changed or the need for additional space occurred. Early alterations typically were subordinate in scale and character to the main building and were often executed using materials similar to those used historically.

Some early alterations may have historic value of their own. An alteration constructed in a manner compatible with the original building and associated with the period of significance may merit preservation in its own right.

In contrast, recent alterations usually have no historic value. Some later additions detract from the character of the building and may obscure significant features. Removing such additions or alterations may be considered.

Alterations are anticipated to continue. It is important that new alterations be designed in a manner compatible with the historic character of the building and implemented without damaging the historic fabric.

Economic Benefits: For more information regarding economic benefits of historic preservation in Monroe and Washington State please visit the Department of Archeology & Historic Preservation website at <http://www.dahp.wa.gov>.

Benefits of Preserving Historic Buildings

Construction Quality

Many of the buildings in Downtown Monroe were constructed with care. These buildings were thoughtfully detailed with high quality finishes—features that owners today appreciate. The high quality of construction in historic structures is therefore a “value” for both the building owner and the community.

Livability and Quality of Life

A physical sense of identity can reinforce desirable community social patterns and contribute to a sense of security. When groups of commercial buildings compliment each other in their historic context, they create a street scene that is “pedestrian friendly,” which encourages walking and neighborly interaction. Decorative architectural features and distinct architectural styles also contribute to a sense of identity, an attribute that is rare and difficult to achieve in newer areas of the city.

Economic Incentives

Owners of historic properties may be eligible for tax incentives and should contact the Washington State Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation, to see if they qualify for these or other benefits. In some cases, owners may donate a facade easement and take a charitable gift donation. Property tax relief may also be available.

Regulatory Incentives

Owners of historic properties may take advantage of special parking allowances and building provisions in city codes and ordinances.

Economic Benefits

Historic structures are irreplaceable. They bestow an identity and provide a tangible history of a place. These qualities make them highly desirable to both members of the community and property owners. Rehabilitation projects also contribute more to the local economy than do new building programs because each dollar spent on a preservation project has a higher percentage devoted to local labor and to the purchase of materials available locally. By contrast, new construction typically has a higher percentage of each dollar spent devoted to materials that are produced outside of the local economy. Therefore, when money is spent on rehabilitating a building, it has a higher “multiplier effect,” keeping more money in the local economy. Studies show that each dollar spent on a rehabilitation project continues to circulate in the local economy five to seven times, which helps support other businesses.

Adaptability

Owners of historic structures recognize that floor plans of historic structures easily accommodate changing needs. Rooms are frequently large, permitting a variety of uses.

Responsibility of Ownership

Ownership of a historic property carries a responsibility to respect the historic character of the property and its setting. Ultimately, residents and property owners should recognize that historic preservation is a long-range community objective that promotes economic well-being and overall viability of the community at large.

Remodeling: “Remodeling” is an inappropriate action because it changes the historic design of a building. The building’s appearance is altered by removing original details and by adding new features that are out of character with the original.

Choosing an Approach

Preservation projects may include a range of activities, such as maintenance of existing historic elements, repairs of deteriorated materials, the replacement of missing features and construction of new additions. The following is a list of approaches that are appropriate for contributing properties:

1. **Preservation.** “Preservation” is the act or process of applying measures to sustain the existing form, integrity and material of a building. Some work focuses on keeping a property in good working condition by repairing features as soon as deterioration becomes apparent, using procedures that retain the original character and finish of the features. Property owners are strongly encouraged to maintain properties in good condition.
2. **Rehabilitation.** “Rehabilitation” is the process of returning a property to a state that makes a contemporary use possible while still preserving those portions or features of the property which are significant to its historical, architectural and cultural values. Rehabilitation may include a change in use of the building or additions.
3. **Restoration.** “Restoration” reproduces the appearance of a building exactly as it looked at a particular moment in time. This process may include the removal of later work or the replacement of missing historic features.
4. **Reconstruction.** “Reconstruction” of a building means rebuilding a structure that no longer exists exactly as it appeared historically.

Context: A key consideration is the “context” of the project. This includes properties that about the subject site as well as contributing structures within its “sphere of influence”

Planning a Preservation Project

The first step in planning a preservation project is to identify any significant features and materials. Retaining such features will greatly enhance the overall quality of the project and integrity of the building. Selecting an appropriate treatment will provide for proper preservation of significant features. In making a selection, follow this sequence:

1. **Preserve:** If a feature is intact and in good condition, maintain it as such.
2. **Repair:** If the feature is deteriorated or damaged, repair it to its original condition.
3. **Replace:** If it is not feasible to repair the feature, then replace it with one that is the same or similar in character (e.g., materials, detail, finish) to the original one. Replace only that portion which is beyond repair.
4. **Reconstruct:** If the feature is missing entirely, reconstruct it from appropriate evidence.
5. **New feature or Addition:** If a new feature or addition is necessary, design it in such a way as to minimize the impact on original features. It is also important to distinguish new features from original historic elements.

In essence, the preservation method that requires the least intervention is preferred. By following this tenet, the highest degree of integrity will be maintained for the property.

Basic Principles for Site Design and New Construction

Designing a building to fit within downtown requires careful thought. It is important to realize that while downtown conveys a certain sense of time and place associated with its history, it is also dynamic. While the Design Guidelines for new construction provide direction for specific design issues, some basic site design and new construction principles form the foundation for compatible new construction. The following principles apply:

1. **Respect the design character of the nearby historic properties.**
Don't try to make a new building look older than it is. The copying or exact replication of architectural styles or specific historic buildings is discouraged. Often, a contemporary interpretation of those architectural styles seen historically will work best.
2. **Maintain the setbacks and alignments of buildings in the surrounding context.**
A new building should align with nearby historic buildings. Other alignments, such as those seen from similar cornice heights, storefront heights and the relative alignment of windows and moldings are also important.

3. **Relate to the scale of nearby historic buildings.**

A new building should relate at the street level to the general size, shape and proportions of historic buildings. This does not mean that the absolute height must be the same, but that the scale of nearby historic buildings be reflected in the infill design. It is equally important for a new building to use similar primary building materials, or materials similar in appearance.

Design Guidelines help assure that, when a new building is built, it will be in a manner that reinforces the basic visual characteristics of the area. This does not mean that new buildings must look old. In fact, imitating historic styles is generally discouraged; historians prefer to be able to “read” the evolution of the street, discerning the apparent age of each building by its style and method of construction. “Reading” is done by interpreting the age of a building, placing its style in relative chronological order. When a new building is designed to imitate a historic style, this ability to interpret the history of the street is confused.

Rather than imitating older buildings, a new design should relate to the traditional design characteristics of the area while also reflecting the architecture of its time. New construction may do so by drawing upon some basic building features—such as the way in which a building is located on its site, the manner in which it relates to the street, and its basic mass, form and materials—rather than applying detailing which may or may not have been historically appropriate. Therefore, it is possible to be compatible with the historic context while also producing a design that is distinguishable as being newer.



An important principle is to maintain the setbacks and alignments of buildings in the surrounding context.

For additional information:

Washington State Department of Archeology & Historic Preservation. Executive Summary: The Benefits of Historic Preservation in Washington State

2

History and Design Character of Downtown

Historic Overview

Early History

The Skykomish River Valley was first settled by Europeans in the 1860s and 1870s. These early settlers were attracted to the area for its abundance of trees for logging and fertile land for farming and ranching. The Great Northern Railroad progressed west over the Cascades and through the Skykomish River Valley. Established in 1889, Park Place, was the first settlement in the valley, and included a general store, post office building and few houses.

The historical information presented here is adapted from the City of Monroe website

John Vanasdlen, owner of the general store, applied to the U.S. Postal Service for a post office and official name. At that time, the Postal Service was not accepting two-word names, so Vanasdlen chose “Monroe,” after President James Monroe. The railroad right-of-way was finally established a few years later, but was more than a mile away from Monroe, so Vanasdlen and dedicated residents moved their buildings to a location near current Downtown Monroe.



Monroe circa 1893. Photo courtesy of Monroe Historical Society.



Ox-team in front of Camp-Riley Drug Store circa 1918. Photo courtesy of Monroe Historical Society and History.

Monroe in the Twentieth Century

Monroe was incorporated in 1902 with 325 citizens. The population swelled to nearly 2,000 over the next seven years, due, in part, to the Pacific Coast Condensed Milk Company and the Washington State Reformatory which necessitated a steady supply of workers.

These two companies, along with the growth of Main Street, provided a solid economic foundation upon which to build a viable attractive community. By 1910, a new brick building on East Main was completed to house City Hall, the Fire House, and library.

Between 1910 and 1980, the population of Monroe experienced little change, but with the completion of State Route 2 and State Route 522, Monroe was linked to the metropolitan areas of Everett and Seattle. Monroe is currently experiencing a second period a rapid growth and like its early settlers, people are drawn to Monroe's natural beauty, economic opportunities, and small town atmosphere.



View of Main Street circa 1966. Photo courtesy of Monroe Historical Society and History.

The Character of the Downtown Historic District

The Unique Character of the Downtown

Downtown is a special collection of buildings, streets and public spaces providing an environment that gives a unique identity to the community. Underlying the collection of buildings is a rectilinear grid of streets, with Main Street running diagonal in a southwest-northeast direction. Solid blocks of storefronts extend down Main Street. This creates a distinctive “Main Street” image, with a rhythmic pattern of upper story windows, decorative moldings and traditional display windows. Variety occurs in the ornamentation and architectural details on buildings on Main Street.

Early photographs provide insight into the design features of traditional building types and the manner in which these were combined to create streetscapes in the downtown area. Photographs demonstrate that most buildings were built at the sidewalk edge with brick and stone as the dominant construction materials. Additional information about the character and development of the area is found in the sansborn map of 1910 which documents the early plots and building footprints of each building in the area. This map, combined with historic photographs, convey the historic character-defining features as well as define today’s building context.



Details such as these create a distinctive streetscape in Downtown Monroe.



Historically, building heights varied in the area. However, a consistent alignment of storefront heights and an apparent similarity of building widths created a uniform line and rhythm along the street, circa 1912. Photo courtesy of Monroe Historical Society and History.

Main Street and a Rectilinear Grid

The primary organizing element of Downtown Monroe is an existing street grid with Main Street running diagonal in a southwest to northeast direction.

Buildings Align in Plan

Most buildings, particularly the predominant commercial structures, are sited at the sidewalk edge. Building fronts align.

Buildings Fill the Widths of Their Lots

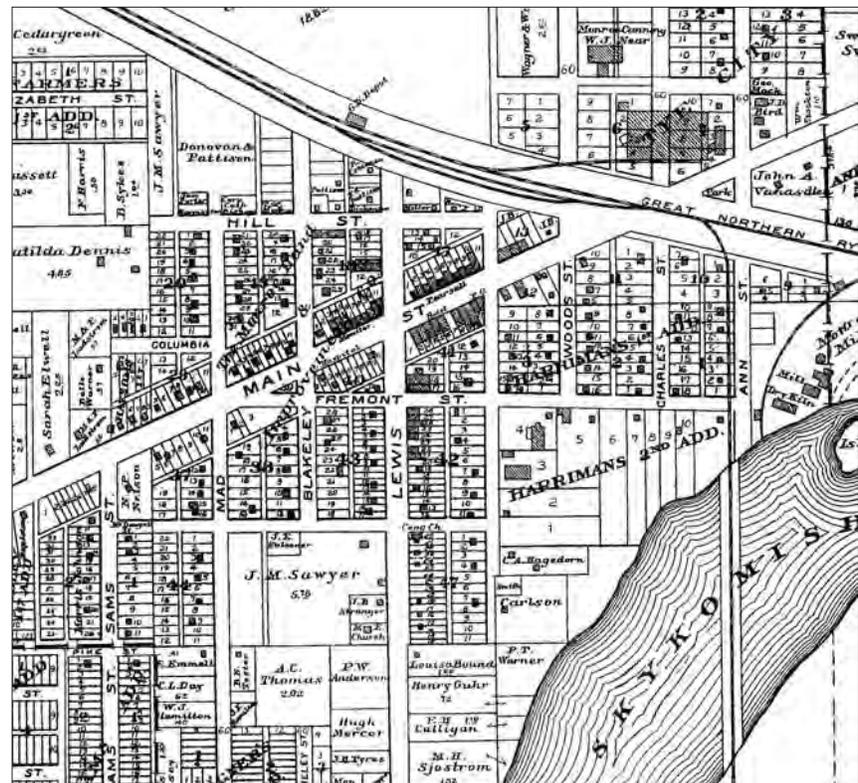
Commercial buildings are constructed out to the side lot lines, creating a solid wall along the sidewalk edge.

Rear Setbacks of Buildings Vary

Variations in building sizes are typically reflected on the backsides. While many structures occupy the entire depths of their properties, some do not. In general, the earlier, smaller buildings left room on the rear of their sites.

Storefront Heights Align

Most first floors, or storefronts, were constructed to relatively similar heights. The first floor of the building is primarily glass which creates a uniform line along the street edge, visually connecting multiple buildings along the street. This connection is further emphasized with cornices and moldings.



Sansborn map circa 1910. Courtesy of the Monroe Historical Society.

A “Wall” of Buildings One to Three Stories in Height is Defined

The first one to two stories are typically defined with windows of similar heights and with moldings that align along the block.

Overall Building Heights Vary in the Area

Most buildings stand from one to three stories in height. Taller buildings are compatible because many of their key features relate to other buildings on the street. Key features include the building storefront, upper story windows, recessed entries and molding.

Building Widths Appear To Be Similar

Many buildings convey the dimensions of a single building lot. Others that are larger often reflect the underlying set of lots with an “articulation” of façade details. Vertical elements, including columns and pilasters, often relate to underlying lot lines, helping to break down building widths and create a rhythm of building fronts along the street. Some buildings may appear to be exceptions, but they generally exhibit this feature in subtle ways.

Streets Are Oriented to Pedestrians

Key building elements, including windows, doors and details, have a “human scale” that supports pedestrian activity. Storefronts provide views to activities inside, creating interest for passersby and sidewalks are wide enough for pedestrians to pass, inviting walking and communication.



Streets are oriented to pedestrians.



Upper-story windows create a pattern across many building fronts.

Upper-story windows create a pattern across many building fronts.

Most upper-story windows are of similar size and use similar spacing patterns. Windows are typically vertically proportioned with aligned arches and sills. These key features combine to create a pattern of evenly spaced openings and of horizontal features that align along the block.

A Sense of Visual Continuity Exists

Because most buildings share a variety of the design features described above, the area conveys a sense of visual relatedness. Within this sense of visual continuity, variety and accent occur. For example, building styles vary, reflecting their various periods of construction. In fact, each building varies from its neighbors in some manner with either a difference in scale, style or materials. For each design feature that varies from its neighbors, others are shared. Thus, a sense of continuity is maintained while accommodating individuality in design.

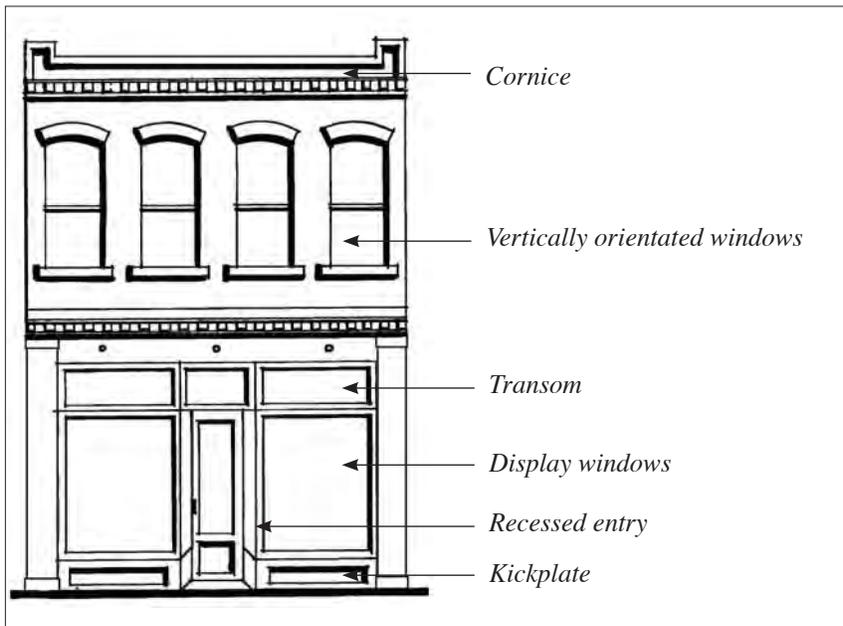


A sense of visual continuity exists in Downtown Monroe.

Commercial Building Types and Styles

There are clear examples of Italianate and Early 20th Century structures in Downtown Monroe. A common practice, however, was to build structures in the local “vernacular” style, closely reflecting simple construction traditions from their respective periods. In some cases, vernacular structures are decorated with a feature from one of the high style building types.

Most buildings in downtown are variations on the traditional American commercial storefront and may include features shown in the diagram below. Buildings were designed for retail-related functions on the ground level, with relatively large openings used to maximize visibility of the goods and services offered inside. Most are built one, two or three stories. The front masonry wall is constructed up to the sidewalk edge. Upper-story windows are smaller, with vertically oriented openings. Upper floors appear more solid than transparent. The typical building types seen in the downtown appear on the pages that follow.



Traditional commercial storefronts can include some of the following features.



Vernacular Commercial Storefront

• circa 1900-1930

The vernacular commercial storefront of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries appears in commercial districts throughout the country, including Downtown Monroe. The first floor is usually transparent for the display of goods, while the upper floors are generally reserved for office, residential or warehousing functions. At the storefront, a bulkhead is found below the display window with a transom above. The main door is frequently recessed.

Vernacular commercial storefront buildings have brick facades, often with stone detailing. Ornamental detail exists, but is simple and limited to a shallow molding as a cornice. Some cornices were made of wood or masonry, while others were made of metal. Although construction of vernacular commercial storefront buildings began as early as 1900 and continued until 1930, the majority were constructed at the turn of the century.

Characteristics

- Larger display windows
- Transom lights
- Bulkhead
- Recessed entry
- Double doors
- Tall, typically double-hung, second-story windows
- Cornice
- Italianate detailing

Italianate

• circa 1900-1930

Originally inspired by Renaissance buildings of Italy, this blending of classical and romantic features became one of the most popular styles in the United States. Italianate details and features could be interpreted in wood, masonry or iron. Many commercial storefronts feature Italianate detailing.

Characteristics

- Double-hung, narrow windows, often with round arch hoods
- Window panes are either one-over-one or two-over-two
- Protruding sills
- Ornate treatment of the eaves, including the use of brackets, modillions and dentil courses
- Quoins at building corners
- Cresting along roof ridges
- Transom, often curved, above the front door
- Flat roof
- Overall, a vertical emphasis in building proportions



Italianate style commercial building on Main Street.

Early Twentieth Century Commercial

• 1920-1950

The Early Twentieth Century Commercial Style reflects advances in technology and increased economic development. A healthy local economy encouraged construction of larger, more impressive buildings. Although most Monroe buildings were wood, those erected in this style were reinforced concrete.

Characteristics

- Flat façades.
- Rectangular fenestration patterns - Windows are usually grouped in sets of two or three with a pilaster strip between groups.
- Flat sidewalk canopies - Canopies occur near the top of the first floor.
- Reinforced concrete construction.
- Flat roof - Generally the roof section of the building has a parapet and cornice detailing.
- Recessed entryway - Found at street level, entrances are usually set back from the building edge with flanking transom windows.
- Storefront windows - Generally large storefront windows would span between structural members.

Post 1950s Architecture

In the decades following World War II, buildings in Downtown Monroe were built using techniques and materials that may or may not stand the test of time. However, many buildings that are highly valued today come from architectural traditions that were once considered obsolete. In preservation brief “Preserving Our Recent Past,” the National Park Service notes that Victorian buildings were once readily demolished to make way for more “up-to-date” structures. To avoid repeating past mistakes, it will be important to encourage an understanding of the role that more recently built structures can play in understanding our heritage in the future.

3

Rehabilitation of Historic Properties

The Downtown Design Guidelines apply to all “contributing” properties downtown. Note that these principles are based on the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation (See Appendix A.) For work on a “non-contributing” building, see Chapter 4: Design Guidelines for New Construction.

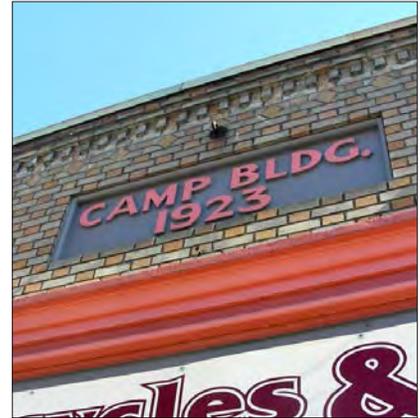
A basic tenet of preservation is to minimize changes to the fabric of historic buildings. It is best to preserve features that remain in good condition. For deteriorated features, repair is preferred. When replacement is necessary, it should be done in a manner similar to that seen historically.

Considering When Reconstruction is Preferred

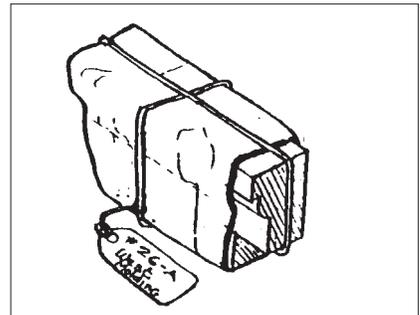
A key principle of historic preservation, as embodied in the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, is that key character-defining features should be preserved. This includes the ornamental details and special features that distinguish an individual building from others in the area. Character defining features also include the basic form and materials of a structure, its windows and doors, as well as its orientation to the street. When some of these features have been lost, it is generally best to reconstruct missing elements. In order to develop a design that is accurate, it is important to draw upon historical information, including photographs, drawings and on-site research that reveals evidence of previous elements.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to derive the design from a similar element on a building of comparable age and style in the vicinity. In other cases, this copying from other sources may be discouraged. The circumstances depend upon the significance of the property being restored.

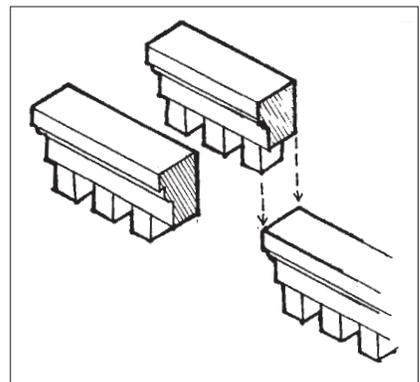
There are also times in which seeking to replicate the historic element is not practical, and designing a new element that reflects the character of the original, without literally imitating it, is an acceptable alternative. The determination of appropriateness depends upon the overall condition of the building and its significance. Here are some considerations:



Historic character-defining features such as the cornice brick work and inset building sign should be preserved.



When disassembly of historic elements is necessary for its repair, carefully identify all pieces that will be stored during the rehabilitation project.



Replace features that are missing or beyond repair.

1. What is the degree of integrity of the property?

If the building is 95% intact, for example only the upper cornice is missing and information about the original design is available, then an accurate reconstruction would be preferred. Conversely, if many of the original elements are missing, a simplified interpretation of those missing elements may be appropriate; this would recall the historic arrangement of details and features while conveying the fact that the building has been altered over time.

2. What is the significance of the property?

If the structure is unique, then an accurate reconstruction would be preferred. Alternately, if the building is one of several similar structures, then an accurate reconstruction may not be as critical.

3. What is the context of the property?

If the building is one of three similar façades, all in a row, and the other two retain their original details, then reconstruction for the third one that has been altered would be preferred. If, by contrast, the context is more eclectic, then a more flexible approach may be considered.

Each of these factors should be taken into consideration when determining the best approach for reconstructing missing elements or for interpreting them in new ways. Obviously, there is no hard-and-fast rule that can be stated. What is important is that a deliberate, thoughtful process be employed in which these questions are answered.



Ornamental details and special features that distinguish an individual building from others in the area should be preserved.

Treatment of Character-Defining Features

Character-defining features of historic properties should be preserved. Collectively, they establish a sense of place, provide “human scale” and add rich detail to the street. Typical features include: original wall materials, decorative cornices, vertically aligned upper-story windows, larger first-floor openings and trim around openings.

3.1 Preserve character-defining features that are intact.

- Do not remove or damage character-defining features.
- Preserve intact features with appropriate maintenance techniques.

3.2 Repair those features that are damaged.

- Use methods that will not harm historic materials. For example, repair is preferred over replacement.
- Carefully identify how a historic element will be stored during rehabilitation when repair and disassembly are necessary.

3.3 Replace features that are missing or beyond repair.

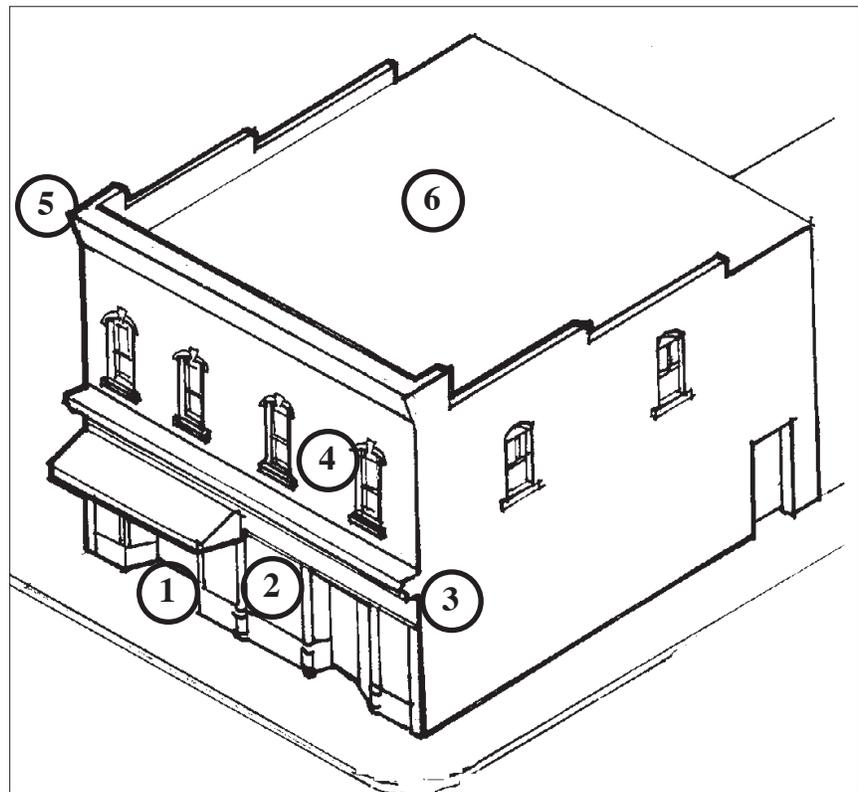
- Reconstruct only those portions that are beyond repair using identical or similar materials.
- Reconstruct the original element based on adequate evidence, if possible. That is, avoid creating details from speculation that could give a false impression of the history of the building.
- Consider a simplified interpretation of historic elements if evidence is missing.



Repair features such as this cornice rather than replace the feature.

3.4 For a commercial storefront building, a rehabilitation project should preserve the following character-defining features:

- Display windows: the main portion of glass on the storefront where goods and services are displayed.
- Transom: the upper portion of the storefront separated from the main display window by a frame.
- Kickplate: the area beneath the display window.
- Entry: the area surrounding the front door, usually set back from the sidewalk in a protected recess.
- Upper-story windows: windows located above the street level, usually having a vertical orientation.
- Cornice molding: a decorative band at the top of the building. A midbelt cornice may sometimes be found separating some floors.



Typical commercial building and storefront features include: 1) recessed entry, 2) storefront, 3) midbelt course, 4) upper-story windows, 5) cornice, and 6) flat roof.

Design of Alterations

Buildings undergo alterations over time. New alterations often occur when original material is missing and should be planned to preserve the building's integrity. Alterations should be designed to avoid destruction of key features and so that one may continue to interpret the historic character of the property.

3.5 Design an alteration to be compatible with the historic character of the property.

- Avoid alterations that would hinder the ability to interpret the historic significance of the original building.
- Avoid alterations that seek to imply an earlier period than that of the building. For example, don't apply "Colonial" details to an 1890s building.

3.6 Avoid alterations that damage historic features.

- For example, mounting a sign panel or awning in a manner that causes damage to decorative is inappropriate.



This row of buildings had lost some details over time. Overhead garage doors that had replaced original storefronts were later alterations without historic significance. Compare this photograph with the "after" photograph below. (Fort Collins, CO)



After rehabilitation, the row of buildings shown in the photograph above conveys a stronger sense of its historic character. Note that some old uses were retained, while other new uses were also introduced. Some incompatible alterations were removed and storefronts were appropriately reconstructed. (Fort Collins, CO)



A modest building can also be renovated to be compatible with the context. In this photograph the original millinery shop front had simple moldings at the top. Compare this photograph with the photographs below. (Fort Collins, CO)

Storefronts

Many downtown storefronts have character defining features seen traditionally on commercial buildings. The repetition of these features creates a visual unity on the street that should be preserved.

Many storefront features are specific to the period of construction and style of architecture of the building. If the storefront feature defines an architectural style or period of construction, it should be preserved.

For some buildings, the specific design of an individual storefront feature is not integral to the architectural style of the building. For example, if the position of an entryway is not important to the design of the building, its location may be moved to suit functional needs.

Preserving significant historic storefronts and restoring altered or missing storefront features are important preservation goals. When planning for the rehabilitation of a storefront, an evaluation of the building's historic integrity should be conducted. Researching archival materials such as historic photos and building plans can be helpful in understanding the role of the storefront and its relationship to the street. Examining the existing building for any clues regarding the location of glass, window supports and transoms can also provide important information on the original design of a missing or altered storefront feature.



Years later, all original features had been stripped from the building. Compare this photograph with the photographs above and right. (Fort Collins, CO)



The same building (above) after renovation exhibits the more classical features of commercial storefronts, including a painted cornice, bulkhead and recessed entry. (Fort Collins, CO)

3.7 Preserve the historic character of a storefront when it is intact.

- Maintain the interest of pedestrians.
- Preserve the storefront glass if it is intact.
- Do not use reflective glass in storefronts, as it is important for pedestrians to be able to clearly see into the display windows.
- Do not set a storefront back from its historic position at the sidewalk edge.

3.8 Retain the original shape of the transom glass in an historic storefront.

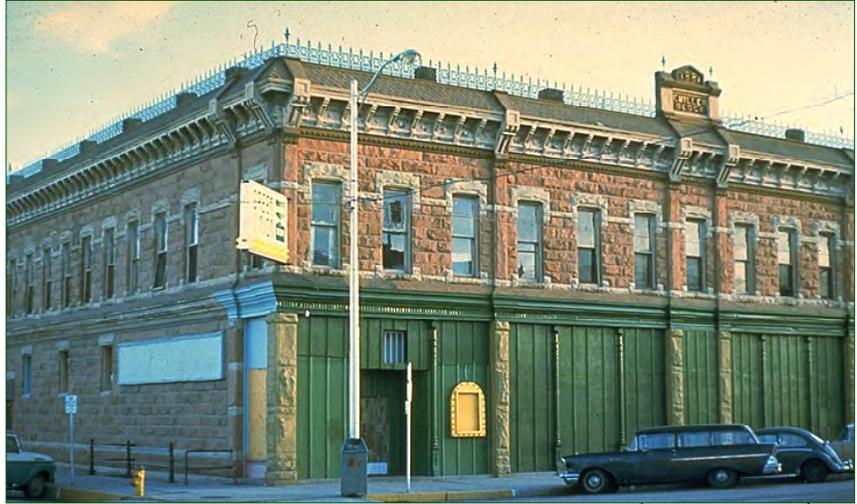
- Preserve the historic shape and configuration of the transom as it is important to the proportion of the storefront.
- Install new glass if the original transom glass is missing. However, if the transom must be blocked, use it as a sign panel or a decorative band, but be certain to retain the original proportions.
- Do not increase transom areas beyond their historic size and proportion.

3.9 If a storefront is altered, consider returning it to the original design.

- Use historic photographs or a simplified interpretation of nearby storefronts if evidence of the original design is missing. The storefront should be designed to provide interest to pedestrians.
- Design new features to be subordinate to original historic features.
- Maintain the alignment of the storefront and the front façade of the building when altering or restoring a previously altered storefront.



Consider restoring the historic storefront opening.



Compare this photograph with the photograph below. (Fort Collins, CO)



Storefront windows are reopened and upper-story windows are repaired. (Fort Collins, CO)

3.10 An alternative design that is a contemporary interpretation of a traditional storefront is appropriate.

- Consider a new design that uses traditional elements when the original is missing (See the introduction to this chapter for an expanded explanation.)
- Design new storefronts to convey the characteristics of typical storefronts, including the transparent character of the display windows, recessed entries and cornices.
- Do not alter the size of an historic window opening or block it with opaque materials.
- Preserve early storefront alterations that have taken on historic significance. In some cases, removing early alterations and reconstructing the original would be appropriate.

3.11 Maintain historic storefront openings.

- Avoid altering the size and shape of storefront openings as they are important characteristics that contribute to the integrity of an historic commercial building.
- Consider restoring storefront openings to their original condition if it can be determined.
- Consider developing a compatible contemporary design when the original window is missing.



Example: Where original details are missing, an alternative design that is a contemporary interpretation of a traditional storefront may be considered. The storefront should be designed to provide interest to pedestrians. (Boulder, CO)



Historic doors are character-defining features and should be preserved.

Windows and Doors

Original windows and doors are important features that help convey the character of a building. Original elements should be preserved when feasible.

3.12 Preserve historic upper-story windows.

- Do not block or alter historic upper-story windows as the (generally vertical) proportions of these windows contribute to the character of each commercial storefront.
- Consider reopening windows that are currently blocked.

3.13 Preserve the functional and decorative features of a historic window.

- Maintain the historic frame, sash, muntins, mullions, glazing, sills and other window parts when feasible. It is especially important to preserve smaller panes in Federal Style buildings.
- Do not use reflective glazing. Window transparency is especially important along the street level to maintain pedestrian interest.

3.14 Preserve historically significant doors.

- Maintain features important to the character of the historic door, including the door, door frame, threshold, glass panes, paneling, hardware, detailing transoms and flanking side lights.
- Do not change the position and function of original primary entrances.
- Do not seal secondary doors shut in an irreversible manner. Any work that is done must be reversible and maintain the door in its historic position so that the door can be used at a later time, if necessary.



Preserve historic upper-story windows.

Entries

The repetition of recessed entries provides a rhythm of shadows along the street that helps establish a sense of scale and identifies business entrances. Repetition patterns should be maintained.

3.15 Maintain recessed entries where they are found.

- If an entry is intact, preserve it as such.
- If an entry has been altered restoring it to the original design is an option. Developing a contemporary design that is compatible is another option. (See the introduction to this chapter for an expanded explanation.)

3.16 Where an entry is not recessed, maintain it in its original position.

- An alteration may be considered if necessary to comply with other code requirements including door width, swing and construction.
- In some cases, entries must comply with accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Some flexibility in application of these regulations is provided for historic properties.



If an entry has been altered restoring it to the original design is an option. Historic image courtesy of Monroe Historical Society.



The kickplate pictured beneath this display window includes appropriate historic details.

Kickplate

A kickplate, located below the display window, is a key defining feature on most commercial buildings and should be preserved.

3.17 Retain an original kickplate as a decorative panel.

- The bulkhead should be preserved as it adds detail to the streetscape.

3.18 If the original kickplate is missing, develop a sympathetic replacement design.

- Replace bulkheads with wood, metal and masonry similar to the historic originals.



This traditional storefront sketch illustrates a (1) recessed entry and (2) kickplate.

Cornices

Most historic commercial buildings have cornices to cap their façades. Cornice repetition and general alignment along a street contribute to the visual continuity on a block and should be preserved.

3.19 Preserve the character of the cornice line.

- Maintain the cornice line as a straight or stepped parapet.

3.20 Reconstruct a missing cornice when historic evidence is available.

- Use early photographs or physical evidence to determine design details of an original cornice.
- Consider the substitution of another old cornice for the original, provided that the substitute is similar in appearance.

3.21 A simplified interpretation is appropriate if evidence of the original is missing.

- Use appropriate materials such as stone, brick and stamped metal. Concrete and resin cast products may also be used.

Façade Materials

Original exterior building materials provide a sense of scale and texture and often convey the work of skilled craftsmen. Original building materials should not be covered, damaged or removed.

3.22 Historic building materials add textural qualities, as well as visual continuity and character to the streetscape, and should be preserved.

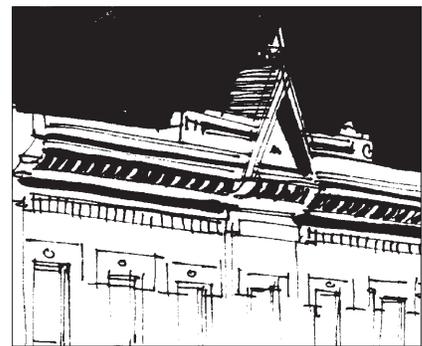
- Preserve the character and finish of the dominant brick and stone building materials.

3.23 Protect historic material surfaces.

- Don't use harsh cleaning methods, such as sandblasting, that could damage the finish of historic materials.
- Clean historic material surfaces with a natural bristle brush, or the "gentlest means possible." Pressure washing is discouraged.
- If chemical cleaners are used, a test patch should be made in an inconspicuous area and reviewed.
- If possible, do not use mechanical means of stripping.
(For more information, see Preservation Brief 6 cited at the end of this chapter.)



If the cornice is missing from a building, consider reconstructing it. (See below.)



Reconstruct a missing cornice when historic evidence is available.



A simplified interpretation also is appropriate if evidence of the original is missing.



Don't cover or obscure original façade materials.

3.24 Protect masonry from water deterioration.

- Provide proper drainage so water does not stand on flat surfaces or accumulate in decorative features.
- Provide a means to drain water away from foundations to minimize rising damp. Do not permit downspouts to direct water to the foundation.
- Do **not** apply protective sealants or clear coats to masonry as they prevent proper breathing and cause moisture to be trapped.
- Do **not** paint unpainted masonry buildings. If masonry was painted historically, it may be appropriate to repaint.

3.25 Do not cover or obscure original façade materials.

- When feasible, expose original façade material to expose interesting detail.

3.26 If material replacement is necessary, use materials similar to those employed historically.

- Consider using substitute materials only after all other options for restoration have been ruled out.
- Use substitute materials only if they are compatible with the original in color, texture and physical makeup.



Reconstructing missing details using sufficient information is encouraged, this can be obtained from a historic photograph or investigation of physical evidence.



Upper left: the original cornice is missing.

Above: the central portion of the pediment is under construction.

Lower left: the shadow lines from the completed cornice once again add interest to the building front. (Fort Collins, CO)

Design of Additions

An addition should be designed such that the historic character of the building is retained. When planning a new addition to an historic structure, negative effects such as loss of original materials, damage to structure or over-scaled additions should be minimized. While limited destruction of original materials is almost always a part of constructing an addition, such loss should be minimized. Three distinct types of additions should be considered:

- A ground-level addition that involves expanding the rear or side footprint of a structure.
- A roof addition that is simple in character and set back from the front of a building. The materials, window sizes and alignment of trim elements on the addition should be compatible to those of the existing structure.
- An addition within the wall plane of an existing building. This option will only be considered on a case-by-case basis as it requires great care to respect the historic relationship of the building to the street. Additions within the wall plane of existing buildings should provide a visual distinction between the existing structures and additions. For example, a midbelt, cornice element or a subtle change in building materials may be used to distinguish the addition.

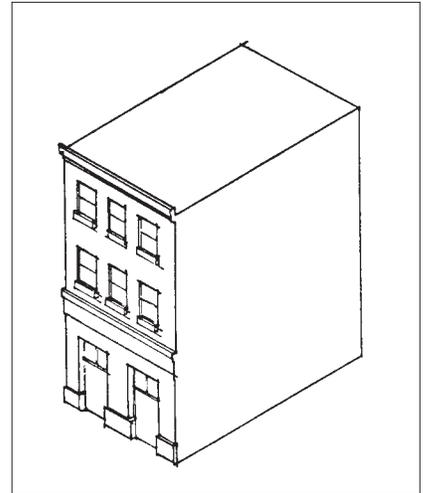
3.27 An addition should be compatible in scale, material and character with the main building.

3.28 An addition should not damage or obscure historically or architecturally important features.

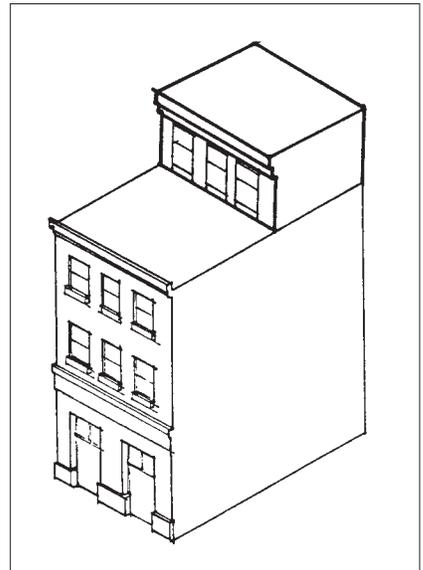
- Avoid loss or alteration of important features.

3.29 An addition should be subtly distinguishable from the historic building.

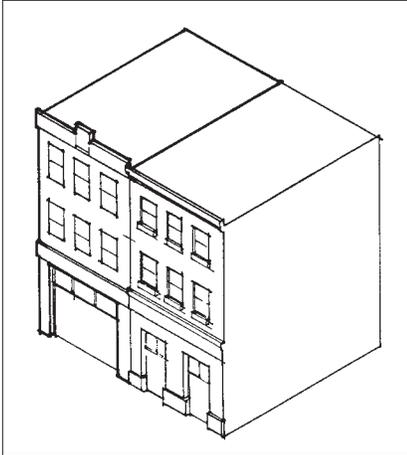
- An addition should be made distinguishable from the historic building, even in subtle ways, so that the character of the original can be interpreted.
- Do not build additions that seek to imply an earlier period than that of the building because it confuses the history of the structure.



An original three-story building, before an addition. (Compare with sketches below and on the following page.)



A new roof-top addition set back from the primary façade is an appropriate alternative approach for an addition.



New addition to the side.

3.30 Additions to the rear or side of a building should meet the following criteria:

- The addition maintains the alignment of storefront elements, moldings, cornices and upper-story windows that exist on the main part of the building and its surrounding context.

3.31 An addition to the roof of a building should meet the following criteria:

- The addition is set back from the primary, character-defining façade, to preserve the perception of the historic scale of the building.
- The addition is modest in character, so it will not attract attention from the historic façade.
- The addition is distinguishable as new, albeit in a subtle way.

3.32 In some circumstances, an addition may be made to the roof of a building and not be set back from character-defining façades, if it meets the following criteria:

- The addition is distinguishable from the existing building by a change in material or a decorative band.
- The addition maintains the alignment of storefront elements, moldings, cornices and upper-story windows that exist on the main part of the building.
- The addition is compatible in scale, texture and material with the original.



A roof addition should be set back from the primary, character-defining façade, to preserve the perception of the historic scale of the building. (Boulder, CO)

4

Design Guidelines for New Construction

The Downtown Design Guidelines apply to new construction and alterations to existing structures downtown. It is important to note that, while emphasis is placed on respecting historic resources, change is anticipated in the area; it is not to be “frozen in time.” Alterations and new construction should occur in a manner that respects the historic design context.

When new construction occurs or an existing structure is altered, it should be done in a manner that reinforces the basic, character-defining features of the area. Such features include building placement, materials and the general alignment of architectural elements and details along a block. Visual compatibility results when the design variables in a new building are arranged to be similar to historic patterns in the area.

Placement and Orientation

With the exception of small gaps for pedestrian or vehicular alleyways, most structures along Main Street are built to the full width of the parcel and align along the front lot line. The resulting “street wall” should be preserved.

4.1 Maintain the alignment of buildings at the sidewalk edge.

- Locate the front street wall at the sidewalk line when feasible.
- Use landscape elements to define the sidewalk edge when a building must be set back from the sidewalk based on specific site constraints (See also Chapter 6: Public Streetscape).

4.2 Orient the primary entrance of a building toward the street.

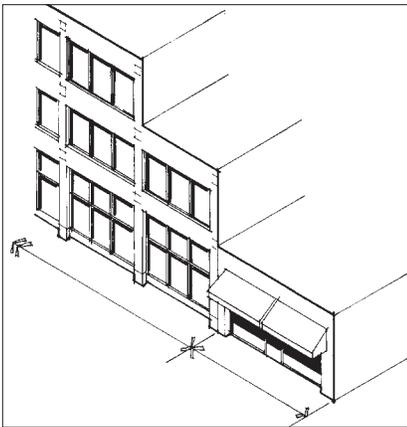
- Define a clear primary entrance.
- Provide a secondary public entrance to commercial spaces in larger buildings.



It is important to note that, while emphasis is placed on respecting historic resources, change is anticipated in the area; it is not to be “frozen.” However, alterations and new construction should respect the traditional design context.



New construction should appear similar in mass and scale to structures found historically in Downtown Monroe.



If a structure will be markedly taller than adjacent buildings, step down the height to establish a transition in scale.

New construction should relate to existing historic structures by maintaining the alignment of horizontal features, producing a similar floor to floor height, dividing a larger facade into smaller modules and maintaining the visual scale of the building.

Massing and Scale

Although building heights vary downtown, there is a strong similarity of scale because most buildings are between one and three stories in height. Maintaining traditional scale may be accomplished by literally constructing a building within this traditional height range; or in a taller building by using design elements that reflect this traditional height.

4.3 A new building should maintain the alignment of horizontal elements along the block.

- Align window sills, moldings and midbelt cornices.

4.4 Floor-to-floor heights should appear to be similar to those seen historically.

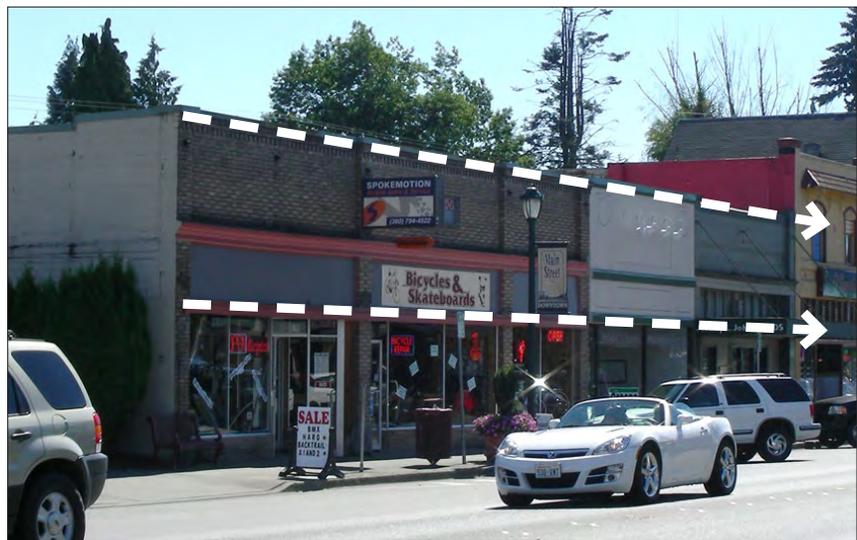
- Design windows in new construction to appear similar in height to those seen traditionally.

4.5 Consider dividing a larger building into “modules” that are similar in scale to buildings seen historically.

- Express “modules” three-dimensionally throughout the building’s exterior.

4.6 Maintain the visual building scale of one to three stories in height.

- Develop a primary facade that is in scale and alignment with surrounding historic buildings.
- Consider stepping upper stories back from the main facade of taller buildings, or design the lower levels to express the alignment of elements seen traditionally in the block.





*This third story addition is setback from the building front to maintain the traditional scale of the street facade.
(Boulder, CO)*



*This image illustrates a modern interpretation of a traditional cornice.
(Boulder, CO)*



*Divide larger building facades into "modules" that are similar in scale to buildings seen historically.
(Bozeman, MT)*



*This building uses brick to delineate the base from the middle and a change in material color and architectural detailing to break down the apparent mass of the building.
(Boulder, CO)*



*This building steps back on the corner which decreases the visual scale of the building.
(Boulder, CO)*

Architectural Character

While it is important that new buildings and alterations be compatible with the historic context, it is not necessary to imitate older building styles. In fact, stylistically distinguishing new buildings from their older neighbors downtown is preferred.

4.7 New interpretations of traditional building styles are encouraged.

Infill construction should:

- Be a balance of new and old design.
- Draw upon the fundamental similarities among older buildings in the area without copying them. This will allow it to reflect its own time and yet be compatible with its historic neighbors.
- Avoid literal imitation of older historic styles.



(Bloomington, IN)



(Denver, CO)



New interpretations of traditional building styles are encouraged. (Boulder, CO)



This contemporary interpretation of a storefront includes a recessed entry and transom element. (Telluride, CO)

4.8 A new building should incorporate a base, a middle and a cap.

- Traditionally, buildings were composed of these three basic elements. Interpreting this tradition will help reinforce the visual continuity of the area.



(Boulder, CO)



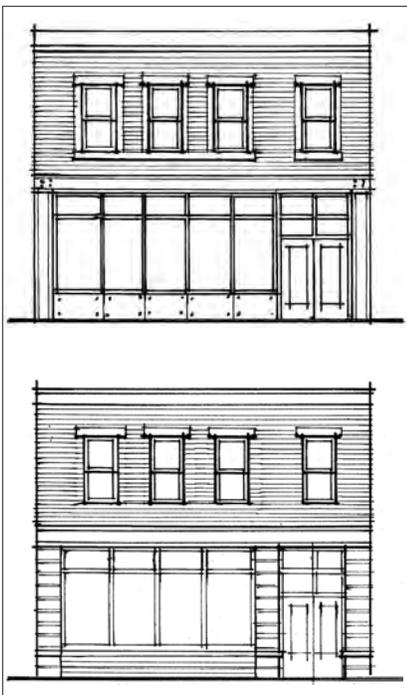
(Bozeman, MT)



These buildings all incorporate the basic building blocks: (1) base, (2) middle and (3) cap. (Boulder, CO)



Contemporary building materials should be used in a manner that conveys a sense of scale similar to that seen in historic materials.



The use of wood and masonry add a human scale to the building face.

Building Materials

Masonry materials were primarily used downtown, and should continue to be predominant. New materials may be considered for new construction when they relate to those used historically in scale, texture, finish and detailing.

4.9 Materials should appear similar to those used historically.

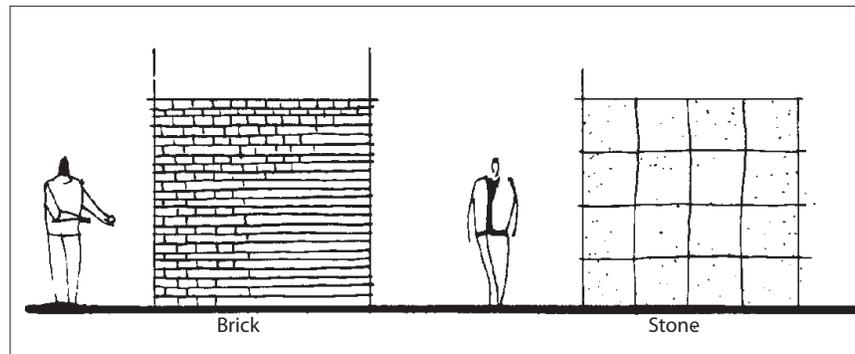
- Masonry was the traditional building material and is preferred for new construction. Brick was the most common masonry used, although there are some examples of stone masonry.
- Wood, brick, stone and metal were used for window, door and storefront surrounds and should be used in new construction.
- Unfinished or reflective materials should not be used.
- Synthetic materials may be used. Many serve best in upper floors where they are less accessible to touch.
- Synthetic stucco should only be used as a secondary material.

4.10 New materials should convey a sense of scale similar to that seen in historic materials.

- Large expanses of featureless materials are inappropriate.
- Appropriately scaled materials contribute to a visually interesting building facade.
- Cast concrete for example may be scored and textured to convey a character similar to traditional masonry.

4.11 An appropriate finish is encouraged for a large expanse of wall plane.

- Brick and stone are the dominant materials and their use in new construction is preferred. Polished stone and mirrored glass should be avoided as primary materials.



Use building materials that are similar in their dimensions and that can be repeated as traditional modules. This will help to convey a human scale.

Facade Elements

Windows

A pattern exists along the streets with the repetition of evenly-spaced, similarly-sized, upper-story windows. These also give a building a sense of human scale—even for high rise towers. Using window sizes and proportions that are familiar to the pedestrian helps them to relate to the overall size of a building. The alignment and similar scale of windows reflect a common historic pattern that should be continued.

4.12 Upper-story windows with vertical emphasis are encouraged.

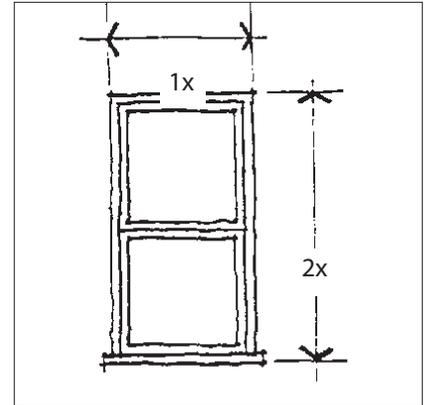
- A typical upper-story window is twice as tall as it is wide. Upper-story windows in new construction should relate to the window proportions seen historically. For example, upper story windows do not typically exceed 6 feet in height and 3 feet in width.

4.13 Windows should align with others in a block.

- Windows, lintels and their trim elements should align with traditional buildings on the block.

4.14 Materials used in and around windows should be similar to those used historically.

- Tinted or reflective glass should be avoided.
- Aluminum storm windows are inappropriate.



A typical upper-story window is twice as tall as it is wide.



Upper-story windows with vertical emphasis are encouraged. (Aspen, CO)



An appropriate design of a contemporary interpretation of a storefront entry. (Boulder, CO)



When providing a storefront at the street level is not feasible, consider using display cases that illustrate goods and services available inside or nearby. (Boulder, CO)



Provide a storefront along a primary pedestrian way when feasible. (Bozeman, MT)

Entries

The repetition of recessed building entries occurring along Main Street provides a rhythm of shadows along the street, which helps establish a sense of scale and invites pedestrians to enter buildings. This trend should be continued in new construction.

4.15 Building entrances should appear similar to those used historically.

- Clearly define the primary entrance with a canopy or other architectural or landscape feature.
- Recess the building entrance.
- Choose a design similar in scale and overall character to those seen historically for a contemporary interpretation of a traditional building entry.
- Place the primary building entrance at or near street level. A sunken terrace entrance is not appropriate as the primary access from the street.
- Design entries to have a high degree of transparency.

Pedestrian Interest

Downtown should continue to develop as a pedestrian-oriented environment of ground floor storefronts. Buildings should relate to pedestrians by using materials and a human scale compatible with local historic patterns.

4.16 Develop the ground floor level of a project to encourage pedestrian activity.

- Provide a storefront along a primary pedestrian way when feasible.
- Consider display cases, public art, landscaping and/or decorative surfaces if a storefront is not feasible.

4.17 Avoid blank walls or the appearance of a vacant lot.

- Design all building facades that can be seen by pedestrians to be visually interesting.
- Provide repetitive elements, such as windows and belt courses to create a rhythm of shadows along a facade. This helps establish a sense of scale and interest for pedestrians.
- Use architectural detailing and material articulation create a visually pleasing facade.

5

Parking Facilities

Although the streets of Downtown Monroe were first designed for pedestrians and horse-drawn carriages, cars currently have a major presence. Their visual impact should be minimized by designing parking facilities to be attractive, compatible additions to the historic area. Using high quality materials and pedestrian friendly façades at the sidewalk edge can mitigate potentially negative impacts of new parking facilities. In general, a new parking garage should remain subordinate to the street scene and should be wrapped with a pedestrian-friendly façade. As a new parking garage is considered, all guidelines applicable to new construction should be followed.

Surface Parking

5.1 Surface should be located in the interior of a block whenever possible.

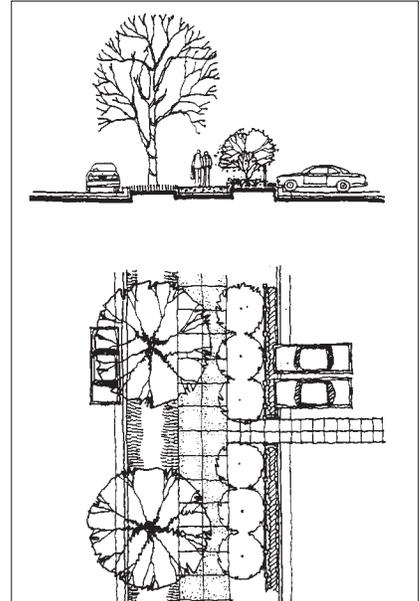
- Do not place surface lots on corner properties as they are generally more visible than interior lots and provide a sense of enclosure for intersections.

5.2 Site a surface lot to minimize gaps in the street wall.

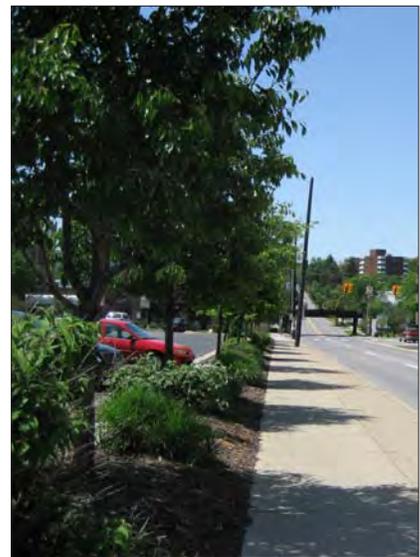
- Place the parking to the rear of a building to preserve the architectural continuity of the street.

5.3 Provide a visual buffer where surface lots abut sidewalks.

- Consider providing a landscaped strip or planter that meets Monroe Code requirements.
- Consider the use of a compatible wall as a screen near the edge of the lot.
- Use a combination of trees and shrubs to create a landscape buffer.



Where a parking lot abuts a public sidewalk, provide a visual buffer.



Use a combination of trees and shrubs to create a landscape buffer. (Ann Arbor, MI)

Visual Impacts of Parking Structures

Parking structures should be designed to enhance pedestrian activity along the street downtown. At a minimum a parking structure should help to animate the street and be compatible with the surrounding historic context. The visual impacts of the cars themselves should be minimized.

5.4 Design a parking structure so that it creates an attractive, active street edge.

- Wrap parking structures with retail space or other active use along the street edge when feasible.
- Provide visually attractive street edges with architectural detailing, murals, public art, landscaping and product display cases when a retail wrap is not feasible.

5.5 Design parking structures to be compatible with historic buildings in the surrounding area.

- Respect the character defining features of adjacent historic buildings.
- Maintain the alignment and rhythm of architectural features as seen along the street.
- Use similar building materials.
- Avoid multiple curb cuts, they complicate turning movements and disrupt the sidewalk.
- Maintain the traditional widths of buildings in the area.

5.6 Minimize the visual impacts of parking structure façades that are visible from the public right-of-way.

- Design walls that do not abut the street edge but extend above existing buildings to be visually attractive and compatible with their surroundings.
- Consider creating visually attractive façades by using architectural detailing, murals and product display cases.



This parking structure incorporates a wrap of retail stores along the street edge. The storefronts are contemporary interpretations of the historic downtown context. (Boulder, CO)

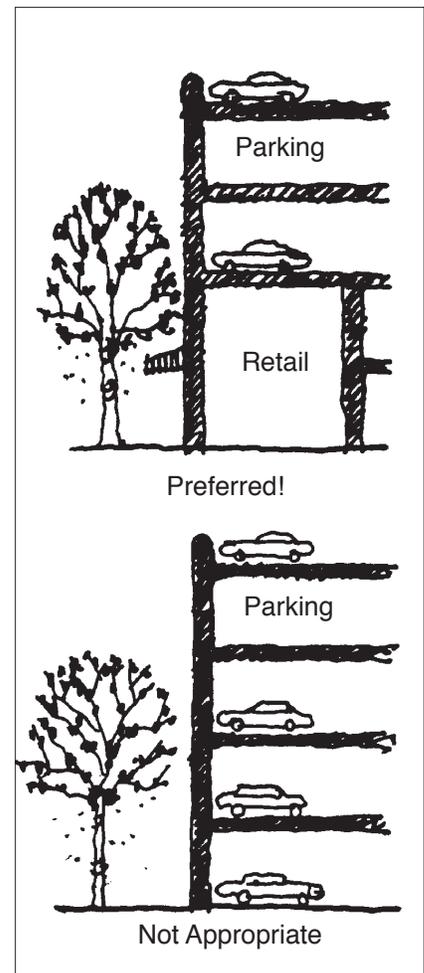
Security and Pedestrian Circulation in Parking Facilities

5.7 Design parking facilities to be accessible to pedestrians.

- Clearly define walkways with graphics, lighting or landscaping.
- Provide a direct connection between parking structures and supporting businesses.
- Plan interior and exterior lighting to assure user safety.



This parking structure has retail at the ground level and architectural ornamentation above to provide visual interest. (Louisville, KY)



The ground level of a parking structure should be wrapped by retail, office or some other active use along the street edge.

6

Public Streetscape

Monroe has the opportunity to have an enhanced downtown where pedestrians share streets with buses, automobiles and bicycles. This mix of traffic can provide a sense of excitement and enhance the pedestrian experience if all the elements are kept in balance.

Design Concept for the Public Streetscape

Streetscape designs for downtown will help establish a sense of visual continuity while still expressing the unique qualities of the area. Consistent street furniture elements should express both a contemporary and historical image of Monroe.



Streetscape designs should express an image of Downtown Monroe as it is today while being respectful of its heritage.



Street furniture should express an image of Downtown Monroe while being respectful of its heritage.



The dining area should not encroach upon the storefront, this is an inappropriate approach to accommodating outdoor dining or merchandise display. This treatment undermines the integrity of the historic building as well as the street wall. (Athens, GA)



Street furniture should express local character in terms of materials and design.

Street Furniture

Several areas of the Downtown Monroe already have amenities in place that enhance the pedestrian experience. New furnishings should continue to enhance the area while working with existing features. Where feasible, benches, planters, lighting, newspaper racks and waste receptacles should be located in a “furnishings zone” which maintains a clearly defined pedestrian travel lane.

6.1 All street furniture in the public right-of-way should have similar materials and finishes.

- Draw upon local character and materials for street furniture design. For example, a simple black metal strap bench would be appropriate.



An appropriate dining area should be in front of the street wall. It is only appropriate to have outdoor dining when there is sufficient sidewalk width to allow for furniture and a comfortable walking path. (Flagstaff, AR)

7

General Design Guidelines

The Downtown Design Guidelines apply to all improvement projects in the downtown area, including new buildings and alterations to all existing structures. Downtown Monroe conveys a sense of a time and place which is expressed through its numerous historic and traditional buildings. When new building occurs or an existing structure is altered, it should be in a manner that reinforces the basic character-defining features of the area.

Awnings and Canopies

Awnings and canopies are noteworthy features of buildings in downtown and their continued use is encouraged. Awnings and canopies should **not** obscure character defining features, damage the historic fabric of the building, or be irreversible.

7.1 An operable or fixed fabric awning is encouraged.

- Use simple shed shapes for rectangular openings.
- Do not use odd shapes, bullnose awnings and bubble awnings as they are inappropriate on most historic structures.
- Do not use internal illumination in awnings.
- Use colors that are compatible with the overall color scheme of the facade. Solid colors or simple, muted-stripe patterns are appropriate.

7.2 A fixed metal canopy may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

- Metal canopies may be appropriate for new construction, depending on the building.

7.3 Mount an awning or canopy to accentuate character-defining features of window openings.

- Awnings or canopies should be mounted to highlight moldings that may be found above the storefront and should match the shape of the opening.



Historically, awnings and canopies are noteworthy features of buildings in downtown and their continued use is encouraged.



A fixed metal canopy may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

All building lighting must comply with all applicable Monroe Codes.



Use lighting fixtures that are appropriate to the building and its surroundings in terms of style, scale and intensity of illumination.



Lighting is appropriately used on these building facades to highlight the retail sign.

7.4 Appropriate support systems should be used.

- Fit the awning and support system into its historic location on the building facade.
- Use existing documentation to ensure that awning and canopy support systems are similar to those seen historically.
- Use wall-mounted brackets and chains as supporting mechanisms for metal canopies.
- Use small or hidden components.
- Minimize the visibility of awning support systems as large, visible frames can have an adverse effect on a building facade.
- Do not use large metal frames or heavy timber members.

Building Lighting

The character and level of lighting that is used on a building is of special concern. Traditionally, exterior lights were simple in character and were used to highlight signs, entrances and first floor details. Most fixtures had incandescent lamps that cast a color similar to daylight, were relatively low in intensity and were shielded with simple shade devices. Although new lamp types may be considered, the overall effect of modest, focused building light should be continued.

When installing architectural lighting on a historic building, use existing documentation as a basis for the new lighting design. If no documentation exists, use a contemporary lighting fixture. Building lighting should be installed in a manner so as not to damage the historic fabric of the building and should be reversible. Most historic lighting was subdued and directed at signs, entrances and building features.

7.5 Use lighting to accent:

- Architectural details
- Building entrances
- Signs

7.6 Minimize the visual impacts of site and architectural lighting.

- Use exterior light sources with a low level of luminescence.
- Use white lights that cast a similar color to daylight.
- Do not wash an entire building facade in light.
- Use lighting fixtures that are appropriate to the building and its surroundings in terms of style, scale and intensity of illumination.

7.7 Use shielded and focused light sources to prevent glare.

- Provide shielded and focused light sources that direct light downward.
- Do not use high intensity light sources or cast light directly upward.
- Shield lighting associated with service areas, parking lots and parking structures.

Mechanical Equipment and Service Utilities

Utility service boxes, telecommunication devices, cables, conduits, trash and recycling storage may affect the character of an area. These devices should be screened from public view to avoid negative effects on historic resources.

7.8 Minimize the visual impact of mechanical equipment on the public way.

- Screen equipment from view.
- Do not locate window air conditioning units on a primary façade.
- Use low-profile or recessed mechanical units on rooftops.
- Locate satellite dishes out of public view.

7.9 Minimize the visual impacts of utility connections and service boxes.

- Locate utility connections and service boxes on secondary walls when feasible.

7.10 Locate and install standpipes and other service equipment such that they will not damage historic facade materials.

- Do not cut channels into historic facade materials as it may damage historic building fabric.

7.11 Minimize the visual impacts of trash storage and service areas.

- Locate service areas away from major pedestrian routes; locate them at the rear of a building, off an alley, when possible.
- Screen dumpsters from view.
- Ensure that all screens meet applicable Monroe Codes.



Minimize the visual impact of roof-top equipment on the public way. (Athens, GA)

Protect and Maintain Property

All properties in downtown should be maintained to prevent the need for more radical repairs or replacement of building features in the future.

A prolonged lack of significant maintenance results in demolition by neglect which is the preventable demise of a historic building due to willful lack of maintenance.

7.12 Minimize the deterioration of a property.

- Provide regular maintenance to a historic building and its site features in order to minimize the need to replace historic materials.
- Maintain material through appropriate treatments such as caulking, limited paint removal and re-application of paint.
- Maintain photographic documentation of the property for use in future preservation efforts.

Demolition

It is vital that all historic properties be preserved, wherever feasible, so that the integrity of downtown will be sustained. Demolition of historic buildings is therefore strongly discouraged.

7.12 Demolition of a historic structure should only be considered after all other possibilities for preservation have been ruled out.

- Consider mothballing a historic structure as an alternative to demolition, making sure to protect it from the weather and secure it from vandalism.

8

Sign Design Guidelines

Commercial signs are a part of the character of Downtown Monroe. Early photographs reveal five primary sign types:

1. Medium-sized, square or rectangularly-shaped signs that project from the building above the awnings or canopies; printed on both sides.
2. Small, horizontally-oriented rectangular signs that protrude from the building below the awnings or canopies but above pedestrians; printed on both sides.
3. Medium- to large-sized, horizontally-oriented rectangular signs that attach flat against the building, above and/or below the awnings; printed on one side only.
4. Window signs painted on glass; used at the street level and on upper floors.

Historically, street level signs mounted on the exterior of the primary facade advertised the primary business of a building. Signs were historically mounted to fit within architectural features without obscuring building design. In many cases, signs were mounted flush above the storefront, just above moldings. Other signs were located between columns or centered in “panels” on a building face.

Signage should meet the Monroe Sign Ordinance in regard to placement, size and location.



This image illustrates the South Side of East Main Street circa 1910. Photo courtesy of Monroe Historical Society and History.

All signage must comply with all applicable Monroe Codes.

The Sign Context

A sign typically serves two functions: to attract attention and to convey information. All new signs should be developed with the overall context of the building and of the area in mind. Signs should be constructed in reversible manner that does **not** damage the historic fabric of the building.

8.1 Signs should be subordinate to the overall building composition.

- Scale signs to the facade of the building.
- Locate a signs to emphasize design elements of the facade itself.
- Do not obscure architectural details or features with signage.
- Mount signage to fit within existing architectural features using the shape of the sign to help reinforce the horizontal lines of moldings and transoms seen along the street.



A sign should be in scale with the facade.



A sign should not obstruct character defining features of a building. (Athens, GA)



Hotel Pearsall in 1906. Notice the painted signs on street level display windows. Photo courtesy of Monroe Historical Society.

Appropriate Sign Types

8.2 Consider a flush-mounted wall signs.

- Place wall signs to align with others on the block.
- Determine if decorative moldings exist that could define a sign panel. If so, locate a flush-mounted wall sign to fit within a panel formed by moldings or transom panels.
- Do not obstruct character defining features of a building with signage.

8.3 Projecting signage may be considered.

- Locate small projecting signs near the business entrance, just above the door or to the side of it.
- Mount large projecting signs higher on the building, centered on the facade or positioned at the corner.
- Review all pertinent regulation when planning signage that will overhang the public right-of-way.

8.4 A window sign may:

- Be painted on a window.
- Cover no more than approximately 25 percent of the total window area.
- Be painted on the glass or hung inside a window.

8.5 Consider a directory sign.

- Consolidate small, individual signs onto a single panel as a directory to make them easier to locate.

8.6 Do not use permanent free-standing signs.

- Consult the Monroe sign ordinance for regulations regarding temporary sandwich board signs.

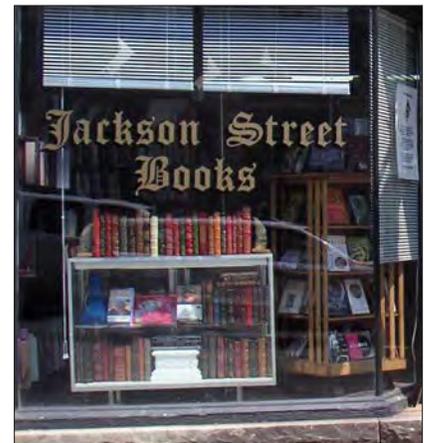
Sign Materials

8.7 Use signage materials that are compatible with the building facade.

- Use painted wood and metal for signage.
- Do not use unpainted materials because they are out of character with the context of downtown.
- Do not use highly reflective materials that are difficult to read.
- Consider painted signs on blank walls as they were used historically.



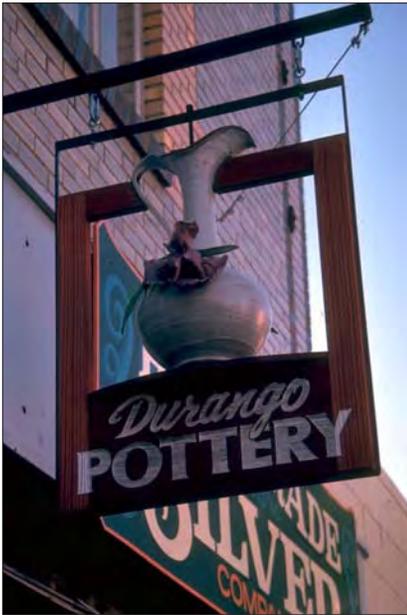
A small projecting sign should be located near the business entrance, just above the door or to the side of it.



Window signs painted on glass, used at the street level and on upper floors, are an appropriate sign type if less than 25% of the window area is painted. (Athens, GA)



Painted wood and metal are appropriate materials for signs. (Asheville, NC)



A symbol sign adds interest to the street, can be read quickly and is remembered better than written words. (Durango, CO)

Sign Content

8.8 Using a symbol for a sign is encouraged.

- A symbol sign adds interest to the street, can be read quickly and is remembered better than written words.

8.9 Sign colors should be compatible with those of the building front.

- Incandescent colors are inappropriate.
- consider using colors that compliment door and window trim colors.

8.10 A simple sign design is preferred.

- Typefaces that are in keeping with those seen in the area traditionally are encouraged.
- Limit the number of colors used on a sign. In general, no more than three colors should be used.
- Avoid hard-to-read or overly intricate typeface styles.

8.11 Preserve historic painted signs where they exist.

Sign Lighting

8.12 Use indirect lighting on signage.

- Directed lighting at signage from an external, shielded lamp.
- Use lighting that provides a warm light, similar to daylight.

8.13 Use internal illumination designed to be subordinate to the overall building composition.

- Do not use internal illumination for signage unless necessary.
- Do not use internal illumination for an entire sign panel. A system that backlights sign text only is preferred.
- Consider neon and other tubular illumination only in limited amounts so it does not become visually obtrusive.

