



**D O W N T O W N**  
**MARSHFIELD**

*Design Guidelines*



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## Principles of Historic Preservation

Each individual building facade plays an important role in the makeup of the downtown district. Storefronts, window displays, signage, color, canopies and architectural details all play an integral part in the successful design of individual buildings.

Rehabilitating your Main Street building can be mind-boggling:

- What materials should I use?
- What colors are best?
- Is an awning appropriate?
- What kind of sign would look best?

Property owners or tenants who wish to improve their buildings should begin by assessing the current visual condition of the entire façade.

- How could storefront improvements relate to the entire visual impact of the building?
- How does the building relate to neighboring buildings?
- How does a storefront improvement relate to the historic upper portion of the building?
- What changes are needed to improve the appearance and integrity of the upper portion of the building?

Once the basic approach to a project has been defined, it is important to assess the property and to identify any significant character-defining features and materials. Retaining these elements and then using the guidelines to select an appropriate treatment mechanism will greatly enhance the overall quality of the preservation project. In making the selection, follow this sequence:

- If a feature is intact and in good condition, maintain it as such.
- If the feature is deteriorated or damaged, repair to its original condition.
- If it is not feasible to repair the feature, then replace it with one that is the same or similar in character (materials, detail, finish) to the original one. Replace only that portion which is beyond repair.
- If the feature is missing entirely, reconstruct it from appropriate evidence or with proportions and materials typical of the building's style
- If a new feature or addition is necessary, design it in such a way as to minimize the impact on original features.

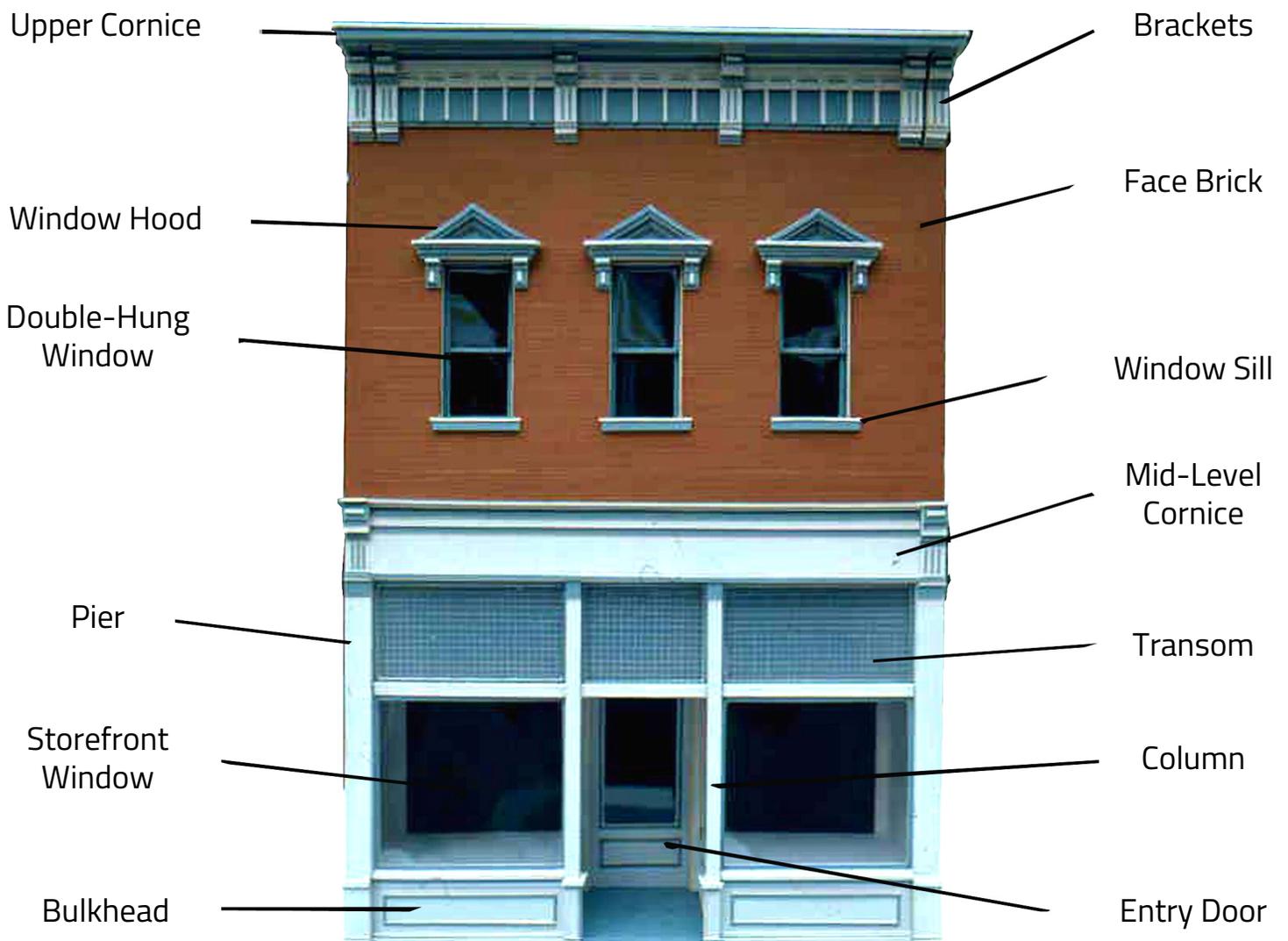
## Design Guidelines for Facades

### Traditional Commercial Facades

The basic commercial facade consists of three parts:

- The storefront with an entrance and large display windows
- The upper masonry facade with regularly spaced windows
- The decorative cornice that caps the building.

These components may appear in various shapes, sizes and styles but the result is essentially the same facade. In the downtown business district of Marshfield, the typical building facade is a two story masonry construction.



## Storefront Design

The traditional Marshfield building façade has a well-defined opening that the original storefront filled. The opening is bounded on each side by piers which were usually constructed of masonry. It is bounded on top by the storefront lintel which is the structural member supporting the upper façade, and bounded below by the sidewalk.

The basic storefront design should include large windows with thin framing members, recessed entrance with overhead transom, a storefront lintel cornice, or a horizontal sign panel at the top of the storefront to separate it from the upper façade, and low bulkheads at the base to protect the windows and act as a platform for window displays.

The basic configuration can be constructed from traditional or contemporary materials, achieving the same result.

The storefront should be composed almost entirely of glass. If glass is not appropriate for the business, consider the use of interior window treatments or temporary window display as a solution.



theotherdc  
Dolcezza Gelato Dupont



storefrontcollective  
New York, New York



storefrontcollective  
New York, New York



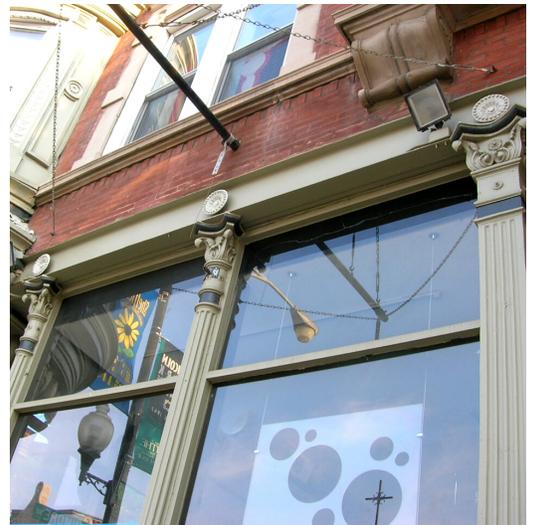
larimerwonderland  
Larimer Square



storefrontcollective  
Paris, France

Key storefront figures to consider:

- The entry should be maintained and restored in its original location and configuration. If the original entry is gone, the new entry should be designed and placed considering traditional design themes and its relationship to the overall building façade and symmetry.
- Transom windows that are covered or blocked should be reopened and restored.
- Storefront bulkheads should be restored or renovated.
- Original elements such as cast iron columns, storefront cornices, entry doors and lighting fixtures should be restored.



- Signage should be integrated into the storefront design.



- Lighting should be integrated into the storefront design.



- Where appropriate, awnings should be integrated into the storefront design. This should be done without concealing important building elements.



- Awnings should be canvas or fabric and use a watershed profile



## Storefront Materials

Always do your best to utilize existing materials. It is better to repair than to replace them

Typical examples of materials and their location on the storefront:

- Storefront Frame - wood, cast iron, anodized aluminum, copper
- Display Windows - clear glass
- Transom Windows - clear, tinted, stained or etched glass, prism glass
- Entrance Door – wood metal or aluminum with a large glass panel
- Bulkheads - wood panels, polished stone, glass, tile, metal clad plywood panels, brick
- Storefront Cornice - wood, cast iron, sheet metal
- Side Piers - should be same material as upper façade (typically brick and stone)

Certain materials should never be used on the traditional commercial building because they have no relationship to the original building's design.

Such inappropriate materials include:

- Cultured stone
- Fake brick
- Rough textured wood siding
- Wood shingles on mansard roofs
- Gravel aggregate materials
- Faux stucco materials

Color schemes on a façade are typically broken down into the following:

- Base color (siding or brick)
- Major trim color (windows, doors, cornices)
- Minor trim color (corner trim and window/door trim)
- Accent (dentil molding, ornate details)

## Painting Brick

Historically, brick on facades would not have been painted. Instead, the brick color itself provided the building's base color. If a brick or stone wall has not been previously painted, do not paint it. If a brick wall has been painted, either carefully remove the paint to expose the original brick, or repaint it. If repainting is done, use a color that is similar to the brick color. If you select a paint not close to the brick color, it will be very noticeable when the paint begins peeling. Do not use waterproof paints or sealants on masonry walls.

Resist the temptation to paint the façade a color that is popular at the moment. By definition, trendy colors, such as grey or black, are only fashionable for a short period of time and look dated as soon as they are out of fashion.

Peeling Paint: 139 S Central Ave



Before: 141 S Central Ave



After: 141 S Central Ave



Before Paint Removal



Paint Removal in Progress

Black and other dark colors are trendy right now, but these photos show that they were in style once before as well. When building elements of a different color are painted dark, they end up looking dated and deteriorated very quickly. Any paint that chips off will show the original color underneath. It is often best to leave the brick unpainted, or if necessary, use a similar color to the original brick. Additionally, do not paint the entire building the colors of a business logo. Save those colors for signage and awnings, not architectural elements.

When selecting colors, choose those that accentuate the color of the brick and other architectural elements. The following color palettes are made up of such colors, and should be used whenever possible.

- Benjamin Moore - Historical Interior/Exterior palette
- Sherwin Williams - Arts and Crafts Palette, Victorian Palette, Heritage Palette, Preservation Palette

## Infill Structures

New construction on vacant lots in downtown should be encouraged. The success of these buildings can be enhanced by recreating the original rhythm of existing building facades. It is important that individual buildings act as part of the entire street façade. When a building is missing and a parking lot or park takes its place, the streetscape is disrupted where these obvious "holes" exist. The design of new buildings must be appropriate and compatible with neighboring buildings. Because these infill buildings are new they should look new and not attempt to duplicate historic structures. Their appearance, however, should be sensitive to the characteristics of its surrounding buildings. Infill structures must take design cues from existing architectural parameters already established in downtown.

- Proportion, Composition, and Setback

- The height and width of infill structures will be determined by the proportions of buildings immediately adjacent. Height should be the same as adjacent buildings. Width should fill the entire void between buildings. If the void is very wide, the façade should be broken up into discernible bays which mimic the rhythm of facades on the streetscape.
- The organization of elements of new facades should be similar to that of surrounding facades. Storefront lintel heights, cornice heights, bulkhead heights, rhythms that exist throughout the block should be carried out in the new façade. Existing window opening patterns of the upper façade and existing window openings of the lower storefront should be acknowledged in the new design. The ratio of window opening to solid wall should also be in keeping with nearby buildings.
- Infill structures should align their facades flush with the adjacent buildings to reinforce the rhythm and consistency of the streetscape.

- Materials

- The most dominant building material in downtown Marshfield is brick. Infill facades should be constructed with materials similar to the material in adjacent facades. Infill buildings should not stand out from the others. Material color should be chosen that is compatible with that of adjacent facades.



## Signage

Signs downtown are important in portraying the image of the business and the character of the building. They are different than signs in strip shopping centers in that they are in heavily-pedestrian areas, and should be designed as such. Contrast between the background color and the logo/lettering is important.

### Sign Quality

Signs should also be custom made of quality materials and not be the backlit. The mass-produced signs often used in recent decades where the entire sign panel is lit is not appropriate for downtown. The liquor store to the right offers an example of this.



### Backlit Signs

If backlit signs are desired, they should allow only the logo and lettering to shine through, rather than the entire background.



### Lighting Signs

Most external signs should generally be lit by gooseneck lights.



## Flush Mounted Signs

These should fit in a logical location on the building and not conceal building elements.



## Projecting Signs

One of the most common sign types downtown are projecting signs. They can be made of wood, metal or even high-density foam. They should be roughly 12 square feet per side, and be mounted at least 7-8 feet above the sidewalk.



## Window Signs

These are highly effective at catching the attention of people walking directly in front of the building. They should not take up any more than 25-30% of the window area.



## Neon Signs

These can be appropriate in downtown as long as they are not flashing and use no more than 2-3 colors.



## Awning Signs

Signage can even be added to awnings, typically on the edge valance.



## Banners for Monumental Buildings

On monumental buildings such as banks or museums, the architecture is at the forefront, and adding signage could distract from or conceal that character. In such cases, adding a series of banners might be the best option.



## Multi-tenant Signs

These should be design similar to single-business signs, since typically, the individual tenants are destination-type businesses rather than ones that rely on walk-in traffic. Thus, they don't each need a full-sized sign of their own.



## Sandwich Boards

A-frame signs are very effective at attracting attention, but just like any other sign type, they should be custom-designed, and reflect the character of the business and building.



## Awnings & Canopies

The canvas awning was an important design element in the traditional storefront. It provided shelter for pedestrians from sun and rain, added color, and acted as a transition between the storefront and the upper façade. If an awning is to be used, its shape should reinforce the frame of the storefront opening. It should be attached below the storefront lintel or sign panel and should not cover the piers on either side of the storefront. The standard street level awning should be mounted such that its valance is approximately 7 feet above the sidewalk and it projects out between 4 to 7 feet from the building.

Awnings are available in several materials, colors, and profiles of varying cost and durability. However, the traditional commercial awning material is canvas and its profile is the watershed design. Awning color should be selected to insure compatibility with your building and with the color of adjacent buildings.



Avoid wraparound awnings. When a building is located on a corner, the awning should end before the building edge and then a new canopy can start on the perpendicular side. Solid canopies were used at times in the past. Typically these were in the form of theater marquees, or over the entrance to monumental buildings like banks and hotels. Unfortunately in recent decades, shingled mansard canopies were installed to act as awnings, but they were far too heavy and overbearing to the appearance of the façade. These should be removed whenever possible. Examples below.



If a rigid canopy is preferred over a canvas awning, it should only span the window or door opening, not the entire façade. Right: A poor example of rigid canopy. Far right: A better example of rigid canopy.



## Maintenance and Repair

Many of Marshfield's downtown structures contain two favorable qualities: They are structurally sound and many original design features still remain. Most past modifications were superficial, affecting features such as windows, doors, and facades, but not the structure itself. It is often possible to see what the original appearance was. Past alterations often were attached to existing walls to conceal various elements without removing them. These qualities enable most building elements to be maintained and repaired rather than demolished or replaced. With a few exceptions, we can transform downtown into an accurate semblance of what was.

Before considering any repair or remodeling, materials should be examined by an architect or contractor experienced in historic buildings. Once evaluated, cleaning and repair may proceed. All work should be professionally done. For the following, (and other), types of repair, consult the index of Preservation Briefs from the National Park Service <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm>

### Masonry

Most existing Marshfield buildings consist of brick masonry. Some are also made of stone, concrete block, and marble. Masonry is a durable material that has survived for generations, and if maintained and/or repaired, can last for generations more. But it is essential that proper methods are used so as not to damage them in the process.



It should not be an assumption that all masonry needs cleaning. Several buildings have already been cleaned and repaired, and others were never painted or only have minor staining or discoloration. If, however, the masonry truly needs cleaning, several methods may be used.

### Water Washing

Washing with water and a detergent is the simplest of all methods and can be successful on lightly soiled masonry. Water washing involves two steps. The first is gently spraying to presoak the masonry. The second involves scrubbing with a soft-bristle brush. Care must be taken to avoid getting water into cracks or openings, which can lead to interior water damage. This should be done before finishing the interior, and should be avoided in cold weather so any absorbed water doesn't freeze and fracture masonry. Test washing a small area of the wall will determine whether this method will be adequate.

### High Pressure Water Cleaning

This method is often used for cleaning deep soot, dirt and stains. High pressure water cleaning should be done only by professionals who know the right spray tip to use to prevent damage or water infiltration, and can make sure to not exceed 1,000 p.s.i. water pressure. Like all other methods, doing a test patch is recommended, and the masonry does not need to look brand new when done.

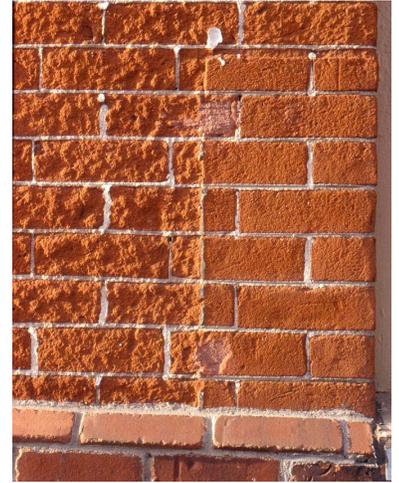
### Chemical Cleaning

Chemical cleaning is best utilized for paint removal and elimination of deep stains. Due to a large variety of chemicals, potential toxicity, cleanup, and specialized equipment, a professional should be used. Care must be taken in the use of acids. Even in a diluted solution, acids can harm limestone and marble. Often, a peel-away type of method is effective for paint removal, where the product is applied to the wall, left to sit for a period of time, then is peeled off, taking the paint with it. For more information, see Preservation Brief #1 from the National Park Service <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/1-cleaning-water-repellent.htm>



## Sandblasting

Sandblasting is often used as a generic term for all masonry cleaning, but this method is actually very damaging to brick and stone, and should be avoided. It can blast away the hard outer surface of the brick, exposing the softer inner core to the elements. Sandblasting also pits the surface, leaving horizontal areas and pockets for moisture and dirt to collect. It is against the law (WI Statute 101.1215) to sandblast or use other abrasive blasting techniques on exteriors of historic buildings. For more information, see Preservation Brief #1 from the National Park Service: <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/6-dangers-abrasive-cleaning.htm>



## Tuckpointing (Repointing)

Weathering of masonry also involves the mortar joints. If masonry is to be cleaned, the addition of new mortar to the joints may be necessary. This is called repointing, or tuckpointing. With this method, the joints are first thoroughly cleaned out to existing sound mortar. Avoid using a power grinder on historic masonry. It's far too easy to damage the original brick beyond repair. Once the old mortar is cleaned, new mortar is filled in and finished to match the depth, style and color of the original joint. Care must be taken to select the right mortar. Never use a mortar that is harder than the brick it is being used on. When it expands and contracts, too hard of a mortar can damage the surrounding brick. After tuckpointing, the surrounding masonry must be cleaned as it is impossible to fill joints without touching them with mortar. For more information, see Preservation Brief #2 from the National Park Service: <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/2-repoint-mortar-joints.htm>

## Wood

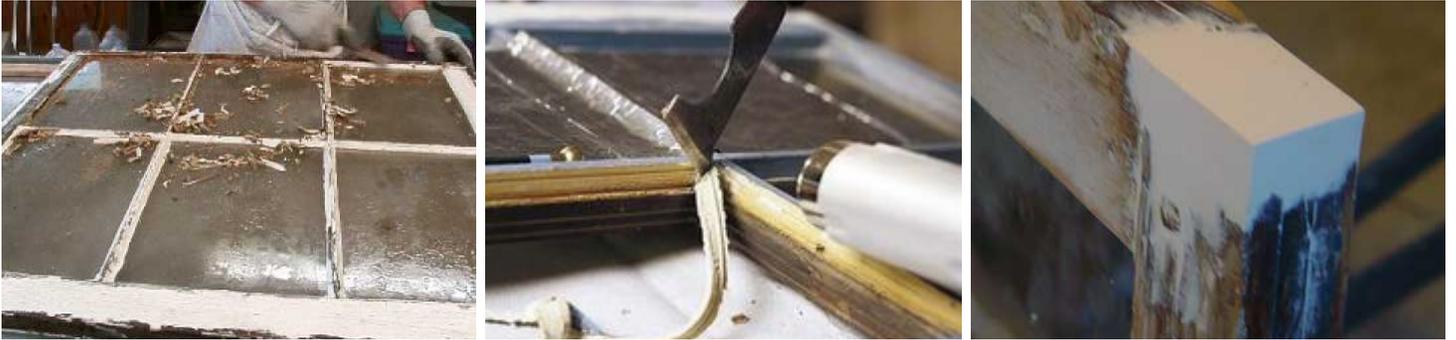
Marshfield's existing buildings use wood on the exterior primarily for window and door framing, trim, cornices, bracing and brackets. Although masonry dominates storefronts, maintenance and repair of wood is essential in restoring original building design and integrity. Wood accents the masonry, and is the material one comes in contact with. If wood is found to be in need of repair, epoxies, bonding agents, etc. can be used or you can replace or patch that particular portion of wood. Replacing the wood frame is not necessary if just one section of frame is damaged. Replace with the same species of wood if possible for uniform finishing.

## Architectural Metals

Architectural metals such as cast iron, galvanized steel, aluminum, copper, zinc, and tin, are used sparingly at roof parapet and flashing, columns, cornices, lintels, etc. Any metal encountered can be cleaned. As with masonry, care should be taken to avoid damage by using gentle methods. Sandblasting is to be avoided, unless blasting cast iron. Softer metals can be cleaned with solvents or sanding. Ferrous metals (metals with an iron content) such as steel door frames, should be painted. Copper, stainless steel, or other similar metals, were meant to be exposed. Aluminum can be left unfinished, painted, or factory finished with a baked coating. Most metals in need of repair can have the rotted portion fabricated and replaced.

## Windows

Windows are one of the most prominent and important features of storefront and upper facades. Unfortunately, they are often the most altered and neglected of all materials. When the original windows exist they should be repaired, re-caulked and re-glazed as needed instead of replacement. When paired with a new interior or exterior storm windows, many original windows can be as efficient as new ones, often for less or similar cost. For more information, see Preservation Brief #9 from the National Park Service <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/9-wooden-windows.htm>



If an original window is missing or damaged beyond repair, or if it was replaced with an inferior unit in the past, its replacement should be custom made of the same materials, profile and size as the original, and must fill the entire original opening.



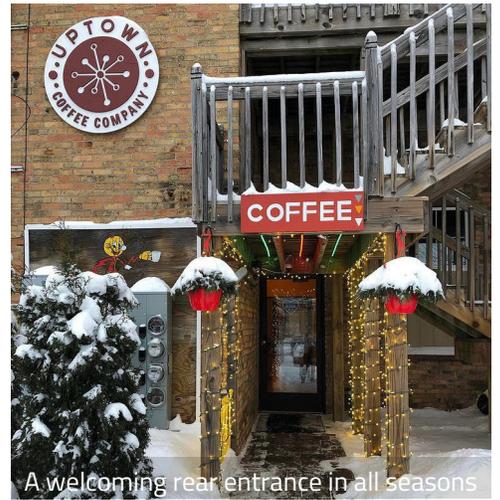
For storefront windows, proper sizing and proportions are essential. Storefront windows on most downtown buildings originally spanned from the bulkhead up to the transom or lintel, and filled in the entire space between the columns or piers. Any new units should do the same. New glass can be rated to control the type of light entering through, such as E-rated glass which prevents discoloring of merchandise, but always avoid tinted glass in storefronts. The use of awnings or simply changing displays frequently is a far better solution for retailers to protect merchandise displays.

## A Word of Warning

Maintenance and repair of existing buildings often require removal of undesirable or damaged materials. Marshfield's buildings were constructed before asbestos or lead were discovered to be hazardous. Not only is it unhealthy to remove certain forms of asbestos or lead, it's unlawful. If either is suspected, notify an architect or contractor. They can verify presence and recommend a certified removal company.

## Rear Facades

Rear facades can become the primary entrance for customers due to accessibility and parking. Unfortunately, these facades are often neglected. These areas are just as important to consider when looking to improve the aesthetics of a building. Back patio seating can address the desire for outdoor dining without noise and traffic. Landscaping is design-friendly and is a positive addition for the environment. Lighting provides a warm welcome and safety into the evening.



A welcoming rear entrance in all seasons



A block of rear facades



Rear façade block potential; including mural, landscaping, fresh signage and accent paint



A typical rear façade



Rear façade potential with restaurant seating

## Sidewall Facades

The introduction of vehicular and pedestrian circulation routes, as well as adjacent building demolition will create a potential problem of exposing sidewalls. The first priority will usually be to build a new building on the demolition site. But if it is decided that it will remain empty forever, then adding windows and or doors may be an option. These walls are more difficult to aesthetically treat because there is less to work with. Trim is held to a minimum, and there generally are few windows, doors, or other features to treat. One must also realize sidewall mounted signs are to be avoided due to City ordinances. However, there are several treatments that can be used to help "dress up" a blank wall. Keep in mind that side walls were typically built with softer common brick as opposed to face brick, so tuck-pointing and other repairs may be needed.

## Doors and Windows

When a sidewall is exposed, and is adjacent to parking or pedestrian access, the introduction of a door would serve not only as an entrance, but would add interest to the wall as well. The door could include trim or other physical amenities to invite use and avoid the appearance of a hole in the wall. The addition of windows visually opens the wall and building's interior to the pedestrian. Caution should be used when adding doors, windows, and their amenities to avoid competing with a main entrance. \*Take caution if applying for federal tax credits and contact the Main Street office or Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC). As these architectural features are on the side and rear entrance, they may be discouraged by the Wisconsin Historical Society and National Park Service.

## Landscaping

If the sidewall is clean and not bland enough to warrant the addition of storefront elements or doors or windows, landscaping is an economical solution. When designed and installed professionally, landscaping can add rhythm, pattern and concealment. Landscaping can be used in conjunction with other treatments. It should be noted that landscaping requires maintenance and is susceptible to damage.

Owning a building listed on the National Register of Historic places, or a contributing building within a National Register District carries with it several benefits. One of these is the ability to apply for federal and state income tax incentives programs for rehabilitation of historic properties. Currently, there are three programs available to owners of properties that are listed in the national or state registers of historic places, or that may be eligible for listing in the national register. These programs are:

- Federal 20% Historic Rehabilitation Credit
  - A 20 percent federal investment tax credit (ITC) for rehabilitation of income producing historic buildings
- Wisconsin 20% Historic Tax Credit
  - An additional 20 percent Wisconsin Historic Tax Credit for persons who qualify for the 20 percent tax credit
- Wisconsin 25% Homeowners Tax Credit
  - A 25 percent Wisconsin investment tax credit (ITC) for persons who rehabilitate non-income-producing historic homes.
  - There is also a program available to owners of properties which are listed in the national register.
- Federal 20% Rehabilitation Credit - plus - Wisconsin 20% Historic Tax Credit
  - Property must be historic. Must be: listed in National Register within National Register district: or determined eligible for National Register through Part 1 application process.
  - Minimum investment. You must spend at least as much as the adjusted basis of the building; or \$5,000, whichever is greater for the federal credit, and \$50k min. for the state credit
  - Must comply with Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation: <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS15322>
  - Formal application is required.
  - Property must be a building.
  - Property must be income-producing. Must be depreciable, by IRS standards.
  - Cannot sell building or perform any unapproved alterations for five years or you may have to repay tax credit to IRS or DOR prorated over 5 years.
  - May apply after work is begun to receive federal 20% credit; must apply before work begins to receive additional Wisconsin 20% credit.

The rules for applying for these programs vary and are subject to change. A complete recitation of the rules governing these programs is beyond the scope of this summary. If you own or plan to own property that is listed on the historic registers, eligible for listing, or contributing in an historic district, Main Street and the Division of Historic Preservation will be happy to assist you in participating in these programs.

- Preservation Briefs (NPS) - [www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm](http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm)
- ADA Check list - <https://www.adachecklist.org/doc/fullchecklist/ada-checklist.pdf>
- ADA guide for small businesses – [www.ada.gov/smbusgd.pdf](http://www.ada.gov/smbusgd.pdf)
- Assistance with these questions is available through the Main Street Marshfield's design assistance program. The Main Street program offers free design assistance to business/property owners within the Main Street area who are interested in doing exterior and interior renovation projects. This program can help take the guesswork out of your rehab project by providing you with sample drawings of possible façade improvements. Color schemes, paint and awning samples, signs as well as technical information about how to get the work done are just some of the solutions the program can offer.
- The goal of all building improvements should be to make each building the best possible expression of itself that it can be. These design guidelines serve as a guide for various improvement projects, still keeping in mind that each building is unique. The guidelines are intended to suggest ways in which property /business owners can take advantage of downtown's charm and history.
- To apply for individual design assistance, simply contact the Main Street Marshfield office. Applications for design assistance are processed on a first-come, first serve basis. So the sooner you apply, the sooner you'll see results. The process begins with a one-on-one consultation at Main Street Marshfield to collect information and determine the goals of the project.
- You are also eligible for a free rendering (exterior only) from Wisconsin Main Street. (5 available per year, first come first serve basis).

## References

Renderings by Joseph Lawniczak

D.I.L.H.R Wisconsin Administrative Code - Building, Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning

The State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Wisconsin Main Street Program

Main Street Marshfield

222 South Central Avenue

Marshfield, Wisconsin 54449

(715) 387-3299

Wisconsin Main Street Program

201 West Washington

Madison, WI 53707

(608) 210-6854

The State Historical Society

816 State Street

Madison, WI 53702

(608) 264-6400