



DESIGN

Supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the commercial district apart.

Design Guidelines for Historic Buildings in Downtown

A checklist of renovations for property owners/tenants when renovating.

- ◆ **Retain and Repair wood windows.** Repairing and then maintaining the original wood windows is more cost effective than replacing them. If energy efficiency is a concern storm windows can be installed - but they should be installed so as not to negatively impact the appearance of the original windows. Further information can be obtained from: *The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows* - www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief09.htm; *Repair or Replace Old Windows: A Visual Look at the Impacts* - www.preservationnation.org/issues/weatherization/windows/additional-resources/nthp_windows_repair_replace.pdf
- ◆ **Repair/Restore original storefronts.** The storefront is a character defining feature of your building. Restore it and maintain it as such. If your storefront has a recessed entry, keep it. Recessed entries help lower energy costs by minimizing the loss of conditioned air. If vandalism is a concern there are options available other than bars in the windows; please consult a Main Street designer. Further information can be obtained from: *Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts* - www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief11.htm *The Maintenance and Repair of Architectural Cast Iron* - www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief27.htm
- ◆ **Show off original materials.** Tin ceiling tiles were designed to reflect light into the store. The high ceiling elevation allowed hot air to rise above the inhabited space and cool. **Do not install vinyl, metal, wood or other siding.** "Updating" your building by covering brick with stone veneer will turn your 1890's building into a 2009 structure or whichever year you apply the veneer. This change will also impact the integrity of your historic district. Further information can be obtained from: *Rehabilitating Interiors in Historic Buildings Identifying and Preserving Character-Defining Elements* - www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief18.htm
- ◆ **Unpainted brick is beautiful!** If your building's masonry has never been painted, do not paint it. Painting masonry will lead to a maintenance issue every 7-8 years. To spruce up the building, clean the masonry with the gentlest means necessary. **Clean masonry with the gentlest means possible.** Powerwash at 200 PSI or less. If power washing does not work try a chemical stripper, again starting with the gentlest means possible. Test chemicals on small out of sight areas before applying them to the whole facade. Sandblasting will damage the structural integrity of the masonry and is likely to remove any etched details. Further information can be obtained from: *Assessing Cleaning and Water-Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings* - www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief01.htm ; *Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings* - www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief06.htm; *Removing Graffiti from Historic Masonry* - www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief38.htm; *Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings* - www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief02.htm
- ◆ **Restore or repair unique architectural features.** These are what make your building and downtown special! If your masonry has been painted these features can easily be highlighted with a contrasting paint color. Please consult a Main Street design team member for suggestions. Further information can be obtained from: *Architectural Character Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving Their Character*

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- ◆ **Keep windows clear of visual obstructions.** Windows in the Main Street buildings should allow visual access into the businesses. If a particular business/tenant does not wish to have their activity 'on display' maybe they should relocate or allow another business or non-profit to use the windows for promotion. Windows on Main Street should never be boarded up, blocked out, or obscured in any way. If a building is vacant, contact the property owner and ask permission to put some kind of display in the window. Further information can be obtained from: *Mothballing Historic Buildings* - www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief31.htm
- ◆ **Embrace the building you have!** 20th century Main Street commercial buildings typically did not have shutters on the upper story windows. Do not add shutters, pediments, or other previously non-existent architectural features. Do not add false history to your building or try to make your building something it never was. Further information can be obtained from: *Alterations without Historical Basis* - www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/ITS/its_38.pdf
- ◆ **Canopies, Awnings and Signs!** Canopies and awnings should be age-appropriate for the building. Fire retardant, fabric awnings with a loose valance are appropriate for most downtown commercial properties. Material composition and placement of canopies, awnings and signs is important. Please consult a Main Street design team member for suitable materials and placement of these items. Further information can be obtained from: *The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings: Repair, Replacement & New Design* - www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief44.htm; *The Preservation of Historic Signs* - www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief25.htm

Resources:

- ◆ **Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & *Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings***; www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/rhb/index.htm
- ◆ **Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings** www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/standguide/index.htm
- ◆ **National Park Service – Technical Preservation Services** website; www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm
- ◆ **Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives** - www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/index.htm
- ◆ **State Historic Preservation Tax Incentives** - www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/tchome.htm
- ◆ **Building Reuse Development Grant:** (North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center, Inc.) www.ncruralcenter.org/reuse/index.html
- ◆ **Local Incentives:** Contact your local downtown/uptown development organization to see what incentives may be available in your community.



This document was created to assist designated NC Main Street Communities and any other community that would like to develop best practices for downtown economic development.