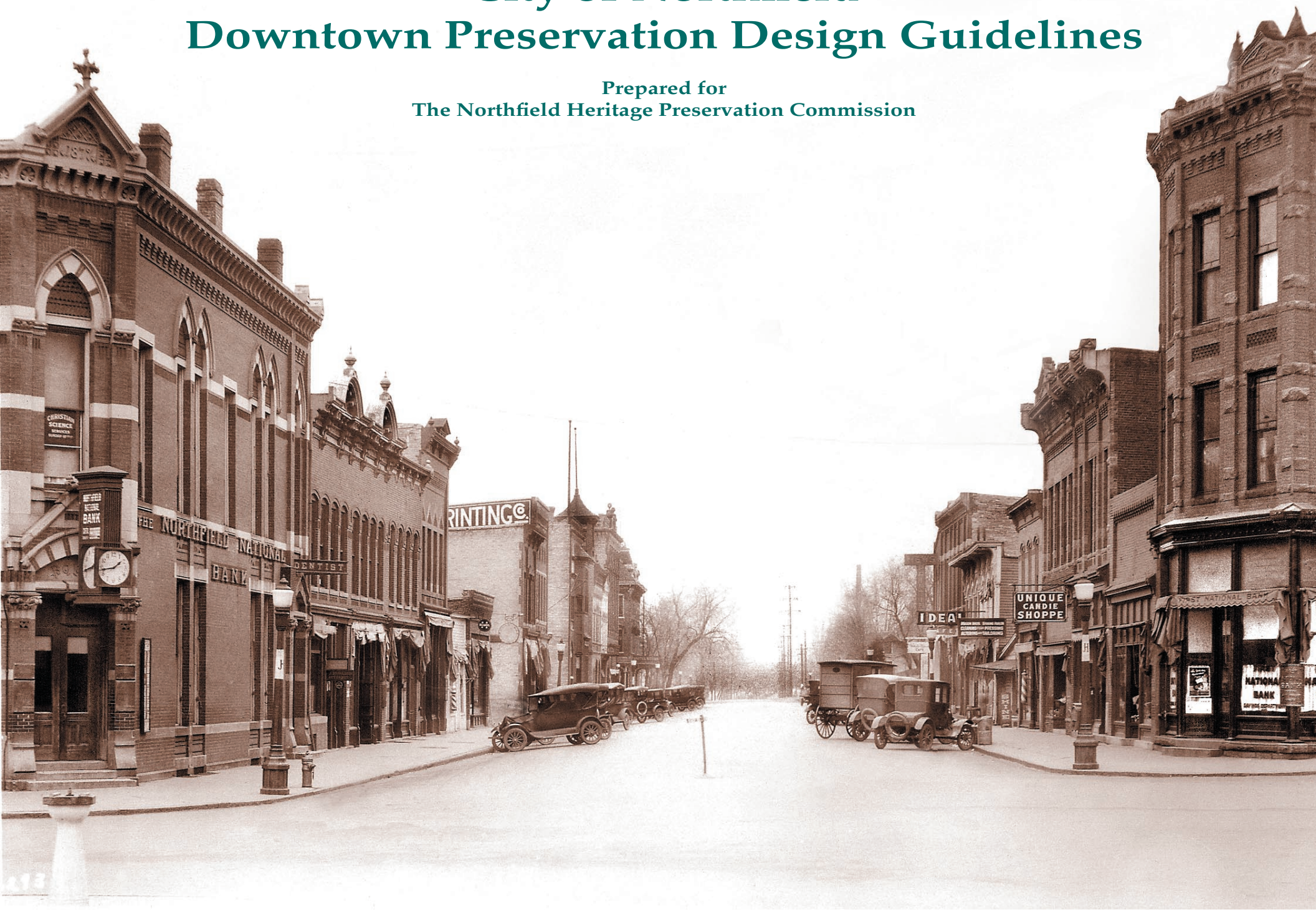


# City of Northfield Downtown Preservation Design Guidelines

Prepared for  
The Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission



## CREDITS

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Historic photographs included in this report are from the collections of the Northfield Public Library Photo collection, the Northfield Historical Society, the Northfield News, and the Minnesota Historical Society.

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Cover Photograph: *Division Street South looking north from intersection of East Fourth Street., circa 1924*

# CITY OF NORTHFIELD DOWNTOWN PRESERVATION DESIGN GUIDELINES

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## PREFACE



*Turn-of-the-century photograph (from left to right) of the YMCA Building (1885) at 304 Division Street, the old City Hall (with bell tower) (1876) at 302, the John Sitze building (1886) at 300, and the Nutting Block (1893) at 220 Division Street.*

The City of Northfield is pleased to present the City of Northfield Downtown Preservation Design Manual. This publication provides building preservation and rehabilitation information for property owners within the downtown Northfield Historic District.

One of downtown Northfield's greatest resources is its unique concentration of historic and architecturally interesting buildings. This manual is designed to demonstrate how using guidelines can often uncover and preserve a building's hidden historic or architectural value.

The Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) and City Staff have answered many questions from property owners about improvements or repairs to their buildings since the establishment of the Northfield HPC, ranging from the proper treatment for doors and windows, awnings, and signs, to painted or deteriorating masonry. The written guidelines and visual examples within this manual are meant to aid those desiring to reuse or recycle an historic property. The illustrations, comprehensive in nature, represent the ideal. At times, because of financial constraints, a property owner may incorporate only part of the plan or undertake long-term phasing of the plan.

This guide is part of a continuing effort to encourage downtown building improvements. It provides information on programs designed to encourage the rehabilitation and preservation of Northfield's commercial architecture. The City has resources available, such as the "Preservation Briefs," National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior to assist property owners with restoration and rehabilitation projects. Additional programs and financial assistance may be available. For more information, contact the Northfield Planning Office at (507) 645-3056 and visit the HPS (Heritage Preservation Services) website of the National Park Service at: [www2.cr.nps.gov/tps](http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps)

## NORTHFIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT & ADJACENT COMMERCIAL AREAS



The downtown Northfield Historic District comprises some sixty-five (65) buildings in the commercial center of the City. The District was created by action of the City Council in 1978 and was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

The darker shaded properties are part of the Historic District. (See listing of District structures by address on page 60.) The Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) is responsible for monitoring change for those properties.

The lighter shaded properties are not within the Historic District, but are older buildings in the commercial areas adjacent to the District. While the HPC does not have mandated powers and responsibilities for these adjacent areas, the HPC should be consulted to provide advice on new construction and modifications to the selected structures within these areas. (See listing of selected structures by address on page 61.)

Exterior modifications to the early 20th-century structures in the adjacent areas should follow the general precepts outlined in these guidelines. Late 20th-century structures, if modified should be supportive of the Historic District, but remain true to their period of construction.

Infill structures within these areas should follow the general precepts outlined in the New Downtown Construction section (Page 29) of this report.

## INTRODUCTION



*Nineteenth-century photograph of Water Street looking north. The building with the "Boom Town" false front to the right side of the photograph is 301 Water Street South.*

Trudging through the snow drifts along the Cannon River in January 1855, John W. North, a Minneapolis lawyer, abolitionist, and land speculator, chose the site for a new town fourteen miles downstream from Faribault. The town was named in honor of its founder. A year later, town resident E. J. Doolittle, writing to a friend back east, described the results:

"Northfield commenced new a year ago last April. We have one flowering mill that cost thirteen thousand dollars 1 water saw mill 1 steam saw mill with other machinery attached to it three hotels, one of them cost Eleven thousand dollars 4 stores well filled with goods & our other Building a school house that cost nine hundred a meeting house building about 40 good nice dwelling houses & twice as many poor houses & shanties there is quite a number of houses going up now the place is growing fast enough it is a very healthy place & is going to be a great Farming country . . . we have no intoxicating drink sold in our town most all Yankees one colored family, two or three Dutch no Irish, Indians pass through town frequently."

As Doolittle acknowledged, John W. North was the town planner and organizer. He laid out the streets on the east and west sides of town, provided for a public park and a space for a public school, and helped start a local debating society or lyceum. The Lyceum Building, at 109 Fourth Street East, is the oldest building in the downtown area. (For the dates and locations of buildings in the downtown area, see the Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission's *Northfield: The History and Architecture of a Community* (1999), the Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission, *Northfield Downtown Guidebook: Heritage Preservation in the Historic District* (1982), and Lynn Carlin, ed., *Continuum: Threads in the Community Fabric of Northfield, Minnesota* (1976) ).

North not only approved the street design of the town and located both of his mills on either side of the Cannon River at Bridge Square, he also worked hard to secure a railroad connection between Minneapolis, Northfield, and Iowa. Hit by the depression of 1857 and unable to secure funding for the railroad, North sold his saw and flour mills to Charles Wheaton, a friend from Syracuse, New York, and Jesse Ames, the prosperous miller who also owned the Ames Mills in Dundas. (The Malt-O-Meal company, founded in 1927, produces cereal products in the west side Ames mill.) The east side saw mill was later removed to provide a view of the river from Bridge Square). The Minneapolis and Cedar Valley Railroad eventually came to Northfield in 1865 and opened up the transportation of farm products to urban markets.

By that time, North had received a political appointment as the Surveyor General of Nevada and had moved to that state.

The impact of the railroad could be seen in the dramatic growth of the town's population which rose from 867 in 1860 to 2,227 in 1870. Hiram Scriver, a Canadian who was the town's first merchant and mayor, built his bank and store (since 1976 known as the Northfield Historical Society Museum) on Bridge Square in 1868. A local banker, Charles M. Goodsell, and local newspaper editor, Charles Wheaton, helped found Carleton College in 1867. Another local merchant, Norwegian immigrant Harold Thorson (also spelled Thoreson) started St. Olaf College in 1874.

The town's prosperity in the 1870s could be seen in the number of new buildings constructed: the Bjorker Building (now Bierman's Furniture) (1870), Ephraim Lockwood's Opera House (1872), Carleton's Willis Hall (1872), Northfield's Central School (1874), City Hall and Fire Station (1876), The Archer House Hotel (1877), Citizen's State Bank (1878), where the Community National Bank is now located, and St. Olaf's Old Main (1878). The prosperity was also acknowledged by the James and Younger Gang, Southerner veterans from the Civil War, who tried unsuccessfully to rob the First National Bank on September 7, 1876.

By the late 1880s and early 1890s, the basic structure of the downtown as it exists today had been established. The buildings erected in this period are taller and more massive, which helps define the distinctive streetscape of the downtown. The McClaughry Block on the corner of Division and Fifth Street was erected in 1882 of brick and stone at the cost of \$23,000. One block north on Division Street, farmer and banker, John C. Nutting built a four-story building in 1889 (since 1893 the home of the First National Bank), and farther north, near the Archer House, the four-story Nutting Block (1893) at 220 Division Street South, which started as a knitting factory. Grocers Louis Tschann and Frank DeGross built the four-story Central Block in 1893, with its distinctive corner tower. Electricity, telephones, and water supply were all installed in that same period.

By the turn of the century, with the prominent downtown sites occupied, new buildings began to be built southward on Division Street. The Northstar Hotel (currently Garlie Veterinary) was put up in 1900. To the north, a Carnegie Library was added in 1910. To the east, the Ware Auditorium (1899), later called the Grand Theater, was built at the corner of Washington and Fourth Streets. To the west, the State Bank of Northfield (currently the Hvistendahl and Moersch Law Offices) was built in 1910 near the Ames mill. Construction now began to move to the west side of the Cannon River where the Ebel Block, now connected to the Bank, had been built in 1894.



Since the original downtown took shape nearly a century ago, many changes have taken place. Some, such as the removal of the cornice of the McClaughry Block, were the result of fires. Others, such as the removal of many buildings on the west side in 1956 to make room for Highway #3, resulted from the shift from railroad transportation to new highway routes for cars and trucks. Still others, such as the development of the River Walkway along the Cannon River in 1970 behind the buildings between Second and Fifth Street on Division Street, resulted from the recommendations of a Minneapolis Planning firm, the implement of a town plan, and the support of a "Save Our River" task force.

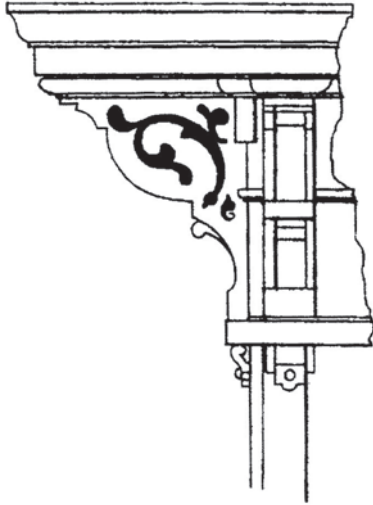
The City Council appointed a Heritage Preservation Commission in 1978 and in 1982 designated sixty-five buildings as part of a downtown Northfield Historic District. These buildings were then listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Since that time, numerous property owners, including Dallas Haas at the Archer House, Gene Jasnoch at the Central Block, Dave Shumway at the First National Bank, Paul Smith at the McClaughry Block, The Northfield Arts Guild for the 1885 YMCA building, and the Northfield Historical Society for the Scriver Building have all done significant restoration work on their buildings. Because of the efforts of these downtown business owners and many others, Northfield has retained its downtown character as a late-nineteenth century Victorian city.

*Introduction written by Clifford Clark,  
of the Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission*



*St. Olaf College band and students heading an enlistment march for the Spanish American War. The 300 block of Division Street looking north, April 1898.*

## BUILDING PROJECT CATEGORIES



Like the commercial district's historic structures, each downtown building project is unique and full of hidden dimensions. However, most work falls into one of the following categories:

### **Preservation—For buildings that have experienced little change through time**

Preservation is essentially retaining and properly maintaining the existing historic aspects of a building. Buildings that retain and reflect the historic character of the district serve as the backbone among new and altered structures. It is impossible to overstate the importance of maintenance. As buildings weather, deteriorate, age, and erode, maintenance is easy to postpone. Simple preventative measures such as caulking windows, repainting exposed and worn surfaces, and guarding against water leakage are time proven money savers.

### **Restoration—For buildings that have architectural significance, but have gone through some change**

Northfield has buildings that are historically and/or architecturally significant, but have been altered. Restoration is the process of returning the structure to its original appearance. Restoration, however, does not imply the creation of a precious museum piece. The structure must have an economically feasible use in order to justify restoration.

### **Renovation—For buildings that have been modified extensively**

Many buildings benefit from some degree of renovation using modern materials and techniques that convey the character of missing original features. But it is important to preserve the integrity of an aged building. Renovation often involves the undoing of previous generations of maintenance, such as removing layers of old paint, peeling off applied wood siding, and uncovering original floors. This process involves stripping away one or more layers of "modernization."

### **Recycle—For buildings that have outlived their original use**

New uses can be found for single purpose older buildings. Railway stations, warehouses, hotels, and banks are all examples of single-use structures. Here, the challenge is to recycle buildings, whose original use is obsolete, by finding new uses that add to the economic vitality of the downtown.

### **Redesign—For buildings which are basically sound but do not enhance the streetscape**

Inevitably there will be a certain number of buildings which are basically sound, but do not enhance the historic character the city wishes to express. These buildings can be redesigned to support the historic downtown. There is often much latitude in the redesign of such structures. However, it is important that the new facade appear appropriate and compatible in the context of the overall streetscape.

**Demolition—For buildings that are structurally unsound or visually intrusive**

In some cases, renovation is no longer a cost effective solution for a neglected building. When a building has outlived its stability and purpose, demolition may be justified. In such cases, opportunities for the creation of open space, off-street parking and/or new development should be carefully studied. Any contemplated new use should be designed to complement the character of the streetscape.

**New Construction—For filling gaps in the streetscape**

An important element in a historic downtown is the quality of infill construction. The desired effect of new construction in a district is to complement existing structures. It is important that new construction not be allowed to dominate or overpower its more historic neighbors. Its basic design elements (size, mass, material, color) must be compatible with surrounding structures. These guidelines will suggest ways of achieving this.



*Turn of the century photograph of Division Street looking south from Fourth Street and Bridge Square. Note the extensive use of retractable canvas awnings.*

## PLANNING FOR REHABILITATION

### Evaluate Your Building

Look closely at your building. It's often clear to see where changes have been made. Look at similar buildings along the street that may not have had major alterations. Look for historic photographs. Downtown area photographs may be found at the Northfield Historical Society, or the Minnesota Historical Society. Search through storage areas, basements, and attics for missing facade elements.

### Set A Budget

Once you have a good idea what your building looked like, you will need to decide what you can afford to do about it. Don't feel that you have to do everything at once. While your plan should reflect an overall approach, you may want to complete the actual work in phases. Keep in mind that there are potential sources of assistance. Federal tax incentives, accelerated depreciation, or tax credits may also be available and should be explored as part of your budget planning. (See page 10)

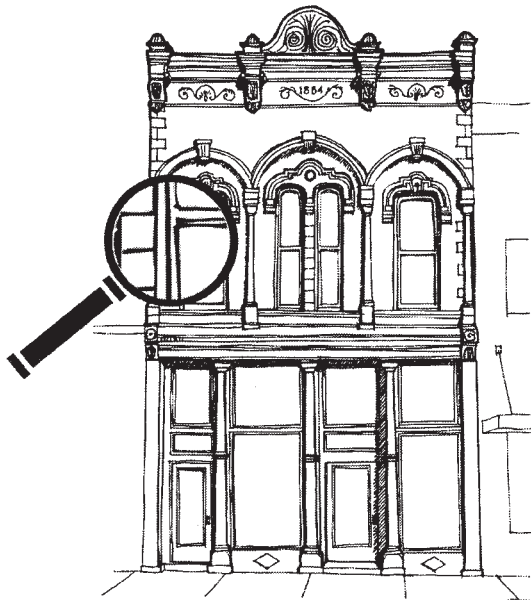
### Decide On An Approach

The previous section described six typical facade improvement options. Your project may fit into one of these categories or it may straddle categories. Let your budget and your building be your guides. Pay special attention to the impact of your plans on neighboring buildings and on the whole streetscape.

### Apply the Design Guidelines

The Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission is responsible for preserving and enhancing the historic character of the downtown's Northfield Historic District and, in that capacity, provides design review for building improvement projects that impact the historic character of Northfield's downtown district.

The design guidelines in this manual cover most of the issues likely to arise in the course of facade remodeling. They are intended to illustrate the kinds of renovation approaches and details most likely to require Heritage Preservation Commission approval. The HPC and the City will be able to give additional guidance in special situations. Remember that the goal is to promote and to preserve the historic character of the downtown commercial district.



## APPROVAL PROCESS FOR EXTERIOR ALTERATIONS

The Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) is pleased to assist property owners in improving commercial property in a historically appropriate manner. The following information explains the HPC's approval process for exterior alterations to properties located within the Northfield Historic District.

### **Statement of Charge**

The Northfield City Council has charged the Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission with the review of any exterior changes to buildings within or abutting the downtown Historic District.

### **Scope**

The HPC will take into consideration the size, scale, color, material, character and adjacent environment of your building when reviewing a request for modification.

### **Philosophy**

If your building is within or abutting the downtown Historic District, and you are planning modifications to the exterior of your property, the HPC encourages you to discuss the plans with the HPC prior to your application for a building permit. At this informal discussion the HPC can answer questions regarding preservation techniques, and offer advice regarding appropriate exterior modifications for your property.

A formal building review will take place at a regular scheduled meeting after a building permit has been requested and the following items have been submitted for HPC review and approval:

- A. Photographic documentation (also, if available, older/historic photographs should be submitted).
- B. Scaled elevation drawing of side(s) to be modified, indicating materials to be used.
- C. Paint chips of intended colors to be used.
- D. Narrative of work to be done and how the work relates to the historical appearance of the building.
- E. Building material or sign samples if not otherwise clearly defined.

## FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR BUILDING OWNERS

While there are many reasons to preserve, restore, rehabilitate, and recycle old buildings, financial incentives can be the most tangible. Financial incentives for rehabilitation have been developed on the local, state, and national levels.

### **Historic Preservation Tax Credits**

Historic Preservation Tax Credits are available to building owners interested in substantially rehabilitating old buildings. Commercial structures that are within a National Register of Historic Places district could qualify for a 20% investment tax credit. Income-producing, non-residential buildings constructed before 1936 qualify for a 10% investment tax credit.

### **Facade Easement**

Through the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota, a building facade can be donated to the organization and leased back to the building owners to provide preservation tax benefits. The program is most beneficial for historic buildings requiring major investment. For more information contact the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota at [www.mnpreservation.org](http://www.mnpreservation.org) or call (651) 293-9047.

### **National Trust Preservation Loan Fund**

The National Trust for Historic Preservation issues grants to increase the flow of information and ideas in the field of preservation, stimulate public discussion, enable local groups to gain the technical expertise needed for particular projects, introduce students to preservation concepts and crafts, and encourage participation by the private sector in preservation. For more information contact The National Trust at [www.nationaltrust.org](http://www.nationaltrust.org) or call 1-800-944-6847.

Additional information about these programs and incentive programs can be found at the HPS (Heritage Preservation Services) website: [www2.cr.nps.gov/tps](http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps)

## BASIC ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN IN NORTHFIELD

Many of the early builders in Northfield tried to establish a sense of stability and permanence in the community, constructing solid buildings made first of wood and then materials such as stone and brick. Most of the key buildings within the downtown Historic District were built before 1895 and many of them remain relatively intact, architecturally. The major changes that have taken place were in response to changing fashions in merchandising and perhaps more significantly in an attempt to be "modern and up-to-date." A constant reminder of the historic material existing today is the wealth of visually interesting details on these buildings at the roof line which have changed less from the forces of commerce and fashion than have the storefronts.



*Turn-of-the-century photograph of the Northfield News Building, 311 Division Street. Large expanses of plate glass were commonly used to provide day-lighting and accommodate ample display. Note the verticality of the original storefront fenestration.*

### Storefronts

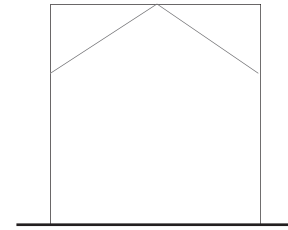
The most important feature of Northfield's commercial buildings is the storefront. An emphasis on transparency is created by the use of thin structural members framing large sheets of plate glass. The large windows display merchandise and facilitate window-shopping. Below the display windows are base panels called bulkheads that are made of stone, wood or metal. The entry door is recessed. This provides cover and prevents disturbance of sidewalk traffic. The recessed door also visually draws customers into the building. Above the entry door and the display windows, and separated by a structural member, is the transom. The transom allows natural light into the store, which originally did not have sufficient artificial light. Often transoms were made of frosted or small glass panels. A cornice caps the storefront. The storefront cornice, often similar in design but smaller than the primary cornice that crowns the building, creates a visual separation between the public and private parts of the building.

Additional elements may also exist on a building's facade. These include awnings, window hoods, brackets, and columns. These elements are used to emphasize the lines and shapes of the facade. Awnings were used extensively in the original designs to provide protection from the elements, to advertise the business name, and to add color and interest to the historic streetscape.

## Historic Building Types in Northfield

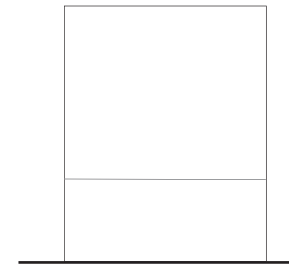
### The Boomtown Block

Boomtown architecture refers to the 1-2 story, woodframe commercial buildings built in the late 19th century, which lacked the detailing of a formal style. The Boomtown type usually has a false front upper-facade that conceals the true roofline, giving the building the appearance of more mass, epitomizing the minimum of style, and the maximum of utility. A remaining example of this style is the structure at 301 Water Street South. The original wooden false front is now covered with a metal siding.



### The Two-Part Commercial Block

The most common building type in Downtown Northfield is the two-part commercial block. This building type, ranging from two to three stories, has a distinct separation between the first level, or public space, and the upper stories, or private spaces. The lower level of this building type is generally commercial in nature: a store, restaurant, walk-in office, etc. The upper level is generally private in nature: living quarters, offices, meeting rooms, etc. This commercial block type, dating from Roman antiquity and common during the late middle-ages, was prevalent in the United States from the 1850s to the 1950s. A good example of this building type is the Nutting Block at 220 Division Street South.



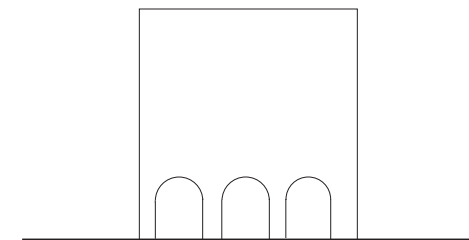
### The One-Part Commercial Block

The one-part block is essentially the storefront level of the two-part commercial block without the private quarters above the store. This building type was sometimes developed as speculative retail development on land of lower value. During the Victorian era and the early twentieth century, the one-part commercial block often housed a bank or other financial institution. In downtown Northfield, this type is represented historically by the State Bank Building at 311 Water Street South, constructed in 1910.



### Arcaded Block

The arcaded block is distinguished by a series of arched openings on a long elevation. Derived from the arcaded porches of the Renaissance, this type was generally built during the early twentieth century; however, in Northfield fine examples predate the turn-of-the-century. The arcaded block is illustrated in Northfield by the Scriver Building at 22 Bridge Square, constructed in 1868, and the original design of the old City Hall at 302 Division Street South, constructed in 1876.





## Historic Building Styles in Northfield

Buildings of a similar type provide continuity for the downtown. Differences in style create visual variety and help to distinguish one building from another. These differences result from what was popular at the time of construction, the use of the building, or the whim of the designer, builder, or owner. Learning about the style of one's building can help answer many preservation questions, including those regarding original treatments, color schemes, and what should replace missing elements.

The majority of the historic buildings in downtown Northfield were constructed during the 1870s through the 1910s. During this time, most commercial buildings in smaller communities throughout the United States were a derivation of the Italianate style. Common elements distinguishing this style are large, heavily bracketed cornices, decorative window hoods, and semicircular or segmental arch-headed windows. Although high-style examples exist, most Italianate commercial buildings were essentially vernacular, meaning they were constructed in a locally accepted method and form, on which standard (and sometimes prefabricated) decorative elements were placed. The Aldsworth Building (1893), at 19 Bridge Square is a modest example of the Italianate vernacular in downtown Northfield.

While there are no pure examples of the Romanesque Revival style in downtown Northfield, the Scriver Building (1868) at 22 Bridge Square has many traits of this style. This style's name came from the extensive use of the rounded arch in early Roman construction. The American architect, Henry Hobson Richardson, in the mid-nineteenth century began using heavy masonry construction and rounded arches. The style quickly developed throughout the country, especially in the construction of warehouses and office buildings. This style was primarily built in brownstone or brick. The Scriver Building is rendered in native stone.



*The Ware Auditorium displays a large, classical fan window, pilasters, fenestration symmetry, and originally had a formal balustraded portico entrance on the Washington Street facade.*

The Philadelphia Centennial Exhibit of 1876 led to a renewal of interest in our country's past and in the development of a national architectural style. This, and the increased influence of the Ecole des Beaux Arts of Paris on American architecture, developed into the Classical Revival Style. This was a popular style throughout the country from the 1890s to the 1920s. The main characteristic of this style is a more academically correct use of classical forms including cornices, columns and pilasters, and porticos, etc. A fine example of Classical Revival architecture is seen in the Ware Auditorium constructed in 1899 at 316 Washington Street South.

## BUILDING MAINTENANCE AND GUIDELINES

### Masonry

Masonry is the most popular construction material in downtown Northfield. Brick, stone, and to a more limited extent, stucco and concrete block are widely used as structural and exterior finish materials. Regionally quarried stone is also a material found in downtown Northfield. Its strength and rugged beauty are its chief assets. Concrete block and stucco are a rare and recent addition to the district, and the use of these materials in new construction and in work on historic buildings is not recommended.

### Moisture

Masonry should be checked regularly for moisture penetration. Moisture can enter masonry through leaky roofs, gutters or down spouts, poor drainage, or a condition known as rising damp. Rising damp occurs when moisture is drawn up from the ground through brick by capillary action.

### Tuckpointing

Repair masonry walls and other masonry features by repointing the mortar joints where there is evidence of deterioration, such as disintegrating mortar, cracks in mortar joints, loose bricks, or damaged plaster work. Remove deteriorated mortar by carefully hand-raking the joints to avoid damaging the masonry. New mortar joints should match the original in style, size, mortar composition, and color. It is especially important to repoint with a mortar of the same hardness as the original, usually two parts sand to one part lime - with up to 20 percent of the lime combined with cement. Harder modern mortars with a high content of Portland cement will resist the warm weather expansion of the brick, causing cracking and spalling of the brick surface. In cold weather, this same inflexibility may cause cracks to open up as the historic bricks contract.

### Cleaning

Although cleaning masonry can have a dramatic impact on the appearance of a building, it should nevertheless only be done to halt deterioration, and not merely to attain a 'new' facade. Cleaning generally requires knowledgeable cleaning contractors. The Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office keeps a list of qualified cleaning contractors who operate in the State.

Whether owners hire professionals or decide to clean the masonry themselves, masonry should always be cleaned by the gentlest possible method. In many cases low pressure water washing (no more than 220 psi), together with scrubbing with a natural bristle brush, may be sufficient.



If paint or heavy grime must be removed, a chemical cleaner may be required. There are a wide range of chemical cleaners available, and a qualified cleaning contractor should be consulted to evaluate your building and recommend a treatment. Whatever treatment is selected, a test patch should first be tried and allowed to weather for a few weeks or months. If the results of the test are satisfactory and no damage is observed, it should be safe to proceed.

## Sandblasting

Sandblasting is especially harmful to brick surfaces, eroding the hard outer layer to expose a softer, more porous surface that will weather rapidly. Be aware that sandblasting will disqualify a project from consideration when applying for federal tax credits.

**Sandblasting is never an appropriate cleaning method for historic masonry.**

## Painting

In general, exposed masonry should not be painted. Unless the surface was painted from the beginning, as was sometimes the case with very soft brick, cleaning and tuckpointing of the masonry is usually preferable. A previously painted surface should be chemically cleaned. Only if chemical paint removal proves impracticable (due to a cementitious paint coat, for example) should previously painted brick or stone be repainted.

Some buildings in the downtown Northfield Historic District are constructed of soft brick. When reviewing the application of new paint over a soft brick exterior, the HPC, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office, should determine if such an application will benefit or hinder the preservation of the structure under review.

## References

The following publications contain more detailed information about masonry.

*Preservation Brief #1—The Cleaning and Waterproof Coating of Masonry Buildings*

*Preservation Brief #2—Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Brick Buildings*

*Preservation Brief #6—Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings*

*Preservation Brief #38—Removing Graffiti from Historic Masonry*

*Introduction to Early American Masonry: Stone, Brick, Mortar, and Plaster* by Harley J. McKee, FAIA., National Trust/Columbia University Series on the Technology of Early American Buildings Vol I. New York

*Masonry: How to Care for Old and Historic Brick and Stone* by Mark London, Preservation Press, Washington D.C.

**All Preservation Briefs are from the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, Heritage Preservation Services—and are available at the Northfield Planning Office—or online at:**  
[www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm](http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm)



## Wood

One of the most popular building materials in the district is wood, due to its structural flexibility, economy, and strength. Storefronts, cornices, brackets, and other decorative facade elements were often made of wood. These original exterior woodwork elements should be retained wherever possible. Regular maintenance will prevent deterioration.

Check periodically for soft, rotted areas, splits, dampness, and pest infestation. Damaged or decayed sections can usually be repaired by re-nailing, caulking, and filling. Epoxy pastes and epoxy consolidants can also be very effective in repairing even seriously rotted wood. **DO NOT** caulk under individual siding boards or window sills - this action seals the building too tightly and does not allow the building to 'breathe.'

Keep all surfaces primed and painted to prevent wood deterioration from moisture. If a new coat of paint is necessary, it is vitally important to clean the wood before any work is done. Remove dirt with household detergent and water to allow new paint to adhere to the wood. Hand scraping and sanding is recommended for removing damaged and deteriorated paint. Only in extreme cases should all paint down to the bare wood be removed, such as where the paint has blistered and peeled. Use electrical hot air guns on decorative wood features and electric heat plates on flat wood surfaces when additional paint removal is required. Chemical strippers may be used to aid in the cleaning process - be certain to follow directions to thoroughly neutralize the chemicals after use; otherwise, new paint will not adhere to the surface. When painting, use an oil-based primer followed by two final coats of oil-based paint.

Severely rotted or missing pieces may be reproduced by a good carpenter or millwork shop. Try to match or at least complement the existing details when replacing woodwork. It is a good idea to remove vegetation that grows too closely to wood.

## References

The following publications contain more detailed information about wood.

*Preservation Brief #10—Exterior Paint and Problems on Historic Woodwork*

*Respectful Rehabilitation-Answers to Your Questions About Old Buildings* by the Preservation Press, Washington D.C.

## Metals

Cast iron, bronze, brass, copper, and sheet metal are used in ornamental and practical roles in the district's historic buildings. Intricate detail was reproduced in cast iron or stamped sheet metal as an architectural ornament at low cost, while practical hardware such as fences, gutters, down spouts, structural supports and roofing were done in metal as well. The decorative or utilitarian components in metal give buildings their human scale and liveliness.

These architectural elements are essential to the character and appearance of your building. They should not be removed unless absolutely necessary.

Cast iron was used extensively for storefront columns and window lintels and is quite permanent. A sound paint coat is essential to prevent rust and corrosion. Rust or paint buildup may be removed by chemical treatment or low pressure dry grit blasting (80-100 psi). If parts are missing, they can be reproduced in fiberglass or aluminum using existing pieces to make a mold. If the missing pieces are relatively free of ornamental detail, wooden pieces might be substituted.

Pressed or stamped sheet metal was most often used to create the sometimes very elaborate cornices that crowned many 19th-century commercial buildings. This thin metal cornice was typically nailed to a wooden framework attached to the building.

Stamped metal ornamentation may be composed of sheet copper, which requires no surface protection, or of sheet iron, usually coated with zinc or lead to retard rusting. Galvanized or lead-coated sheet metal should always be kept painted. If stamped metal is to be cleaned, a chemical paint remover should be used. Dry grit blasting, while usually safe for cast iron, should never be used on the thinner, more flexible pressed metal.

Reproductions of missing pressed metal ornaments can often be made by a sheet metal shop. In some cases, pressed metal decorative items, stamped in the original molds, are available commercially.

All metals requiring painting should first be primed with a commercial metal primer, followed by two finish coats of oil-based paint.

## References

The following publications contain more detailed information about metals.

*Preservation Brief #13—The Repair and Thermal Upgrading of Historic Steel Windows*

*Metals in America's Historic Buildings: Uses and Preservation Treatments* by Margot Gayle, David W. Look, AIA, and John G. Waite, Government Printing Office, Washington D.C.



## Other Materials

Some buildings in downtown Northfield have been covered with other materials to modernize their appearance or limit the necessity for maintenance. Aluminum siding and artificial stone are common examples. The materials often obscure important details or cause them to be removed, such as cornices, window trim, or the storefront as a whole. They frequently can cause or intensify internal structural problems, and they reduce the visual interest of a complex wall surface.

The loss of original detail is the most obvious problem encountered with synthetic sidings. An impervious layer of siding can allow serious decay or insect damage to go unseen and unchecked as well. Moisture from condensation or interior water vapor can rot wooden materials or damage masonry in the wall. The energy savings and maintenance cost effectiveness of aluminum and artificial stone are also subject to question. Synthetic sidings by themselves provide very little insulation, and the ongoing maintenance and painting required after the surface has begun to degrade can be costly.

Synthetic siding should not be applied to buildings in historic downtowns. Wherever possible, such materials should be removed in the course of maintenance and improvements to properties.

## References

The following publication contains more detailed information about substitute siding materials.

*Preservation Brief #8—Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings*

## General Storefront Design Considerations

Whether restoring a storefront or considering a more contemporary treatment, your plan should be based on a traditional storefront design. One characteristic of the traditional commercial facade is a well-defined frame for the storefront. This area is bounded by a pilaster or pier on either side, the sidewalk below and the storefront cornice above. It is important to contain the storefront within this frame. When the storefront is allowed to extend beyond its frame, it may no longer appear as an integral part of the overall facade design; rather, it may appear tacked on. Look at historic photographs of your building or of similar buildings to learn the original configuration of your storefront.

The following are several ideas to consider when planning your storefront renovation. Each originates in the design of the traditional storefront; however, they are not solely historical concepts. They represent sound design principles aimed at enhancing both appearance and accessibility.

### Contain the storefront

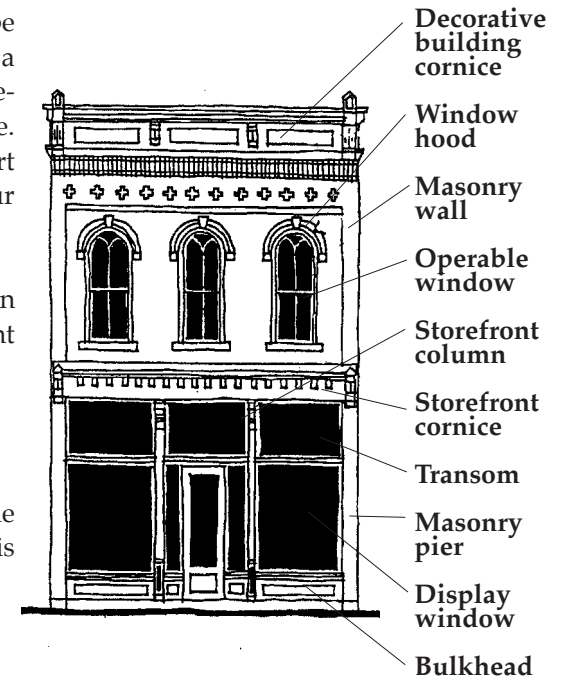
A storefront should be designed to fit within the original facade opening and not extend beyond it. The storefront might be set back slightly (perhaps 3 inches) from the plane of the facade to accentuate this sense of containment.

### Transparency

Large display windows were a prominent feature of the traditional storefront. As a design element, they are integral to the overall proportioning of the facade. Functionally, the large glass area provides maximum light and display area, while visually opening the facade to the street. As a rule, the storefront should be composed primarily of glass, while the upper facade should be more solid and contained with smaller, evenly spaced windows.

### Appropriate materials

The color and texture of the storefront materials should be simple and unobtrusive: (1) The storefront frame can be wood, cast iron, or aluminum with a baked enamel finish; (2) the display windows should be clear glass; (3) transom windows may be clear, prism, or stained glass; (4) the entrance door should have a large glass panel and can be made of wood, painted steel, or aluminum with a baked enamel finish; (5) the base panels (bulkheads) can be of wood, polished stone, glass, tile, or pre-finished or painted aluminum-clad plywood panels; (6) the storefront cornice can be made of wood, cast iron, or sheet metal, or appropriate prefabricated painted components, or sometimes the horizontal supporting beam can serve as the storefront cap; (7) the side piers should be of the same material as the upper facade.



## Inappropriate materials

Certain materials and design elements should never be used on a traditional commercial building. A mansard roof with wooden shingles, rough textured wood siding, metal siding, fake bricks or stone, and gravel aggregate materials are not appropriate. Inappropriate historical themes should also be avoided. Small window panes, a colonial door, and storefront shutters are 18th-century elements that do not belong on most 19th- or 20th-century facades.

## Simplicity

Whether you are renovating an existing storefront or designing a new one, remember that the emphasis should be on transparency. The fundamental design should include large display windows with thin framing members, a recessed entrance, a cornice or a horizontal sign panel above the storefront to separate it visually from the upper facade, and low base panels to protect the windows and define the entrance.

This same basic arrangement will be equally appropriate whether constructed using traditional or modern materials.



*Note the large, oversized display windows, the bulkhead below and the retractable, canvas awning above.*



# Doors, Windows, and Awnings

Doors and windows help to define the architecture of historic downtown Northfield. The upper story windows establish a rhythm in the streetscape that ties the facades together. The storefront with its large glass area opens the store to the street, inviting pedestrians to look and possibly come inside. Most doors in the district were wood frame with a large glass area to match the openness of the storefront as a whole.

Doors and windows should be carefully maintained and repaired. Always retain original doors and windows if at all possible. Replacement of elements should duplicate the original form of the material closely. The original size and spacing of window muntins dividing the sash are particularly important. The size and division of window sashes should be appropriate to each building's style. Hardware is often a troublesome repair problem. Window and door hardware which reproduces turn-of-the-century forms is now readily available. Inoperable decorative metal or plastic shutters are inappropriate for use in the district. On buildings that originally featured shutters, make sure the panels exactly match the size and shape of the window opening.

## Storefront entry doors

Storefront entry doors should present an attractive appearance and should be visually appropriate for your storefront. Original doors should be retained if possible. If a new door is to be installed it should closely resemble the design and proportions of the original door. Wood is the preferred material, but steel or aluminum with a baked enamel finish may also be used. Colonial era style doors, unpainted aluminum doors and other very decorative door designs should be avoided.

## Replacement windows

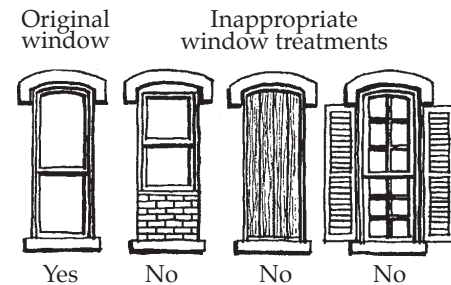
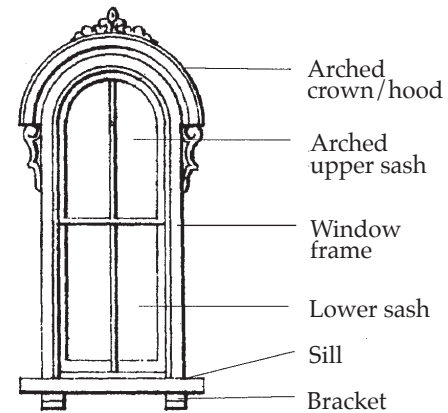
When more energy efficient double-glazed aluminum or wood windows are to be used as replacements, they should match the original wood windows in size and style. Never replace a multi-pane window with a single large pane of glass. Aluminum windows should be in a baked enamel finish rather than the color of clear unfinished aluminum.

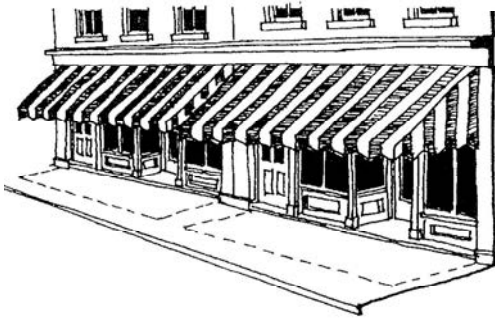
## Storm windows

Storm windows may be desirable on upper story windows for energy conservation. An exterior storm window can also serve to protect and upgrade older wooden sashes. They should conform with the size and shape of the existing sash and be painted to match as well. Interior storm windows are a good choice where original windows might be obscured by the addition of exterior storm sash.



Original storefront doors were typically recessed, constructed of wood with a large window above a single or double panel that complemented the bulkhead design below the display windows





## Awnings

Canvas awnings were a familiar feature of 19th-century storefronts. Apart from their primary function of sun and glare protection, they also offer shelter to pedestrians and can be an attractive addition to the storefront. Additionally, the valance can serve as a sign panel for your business. Naturally, if your building faces north, they will be of lesser practical benefit.

Select awnings that closely follow historical precedents in shape and design. Awning sizes and mounting height should be based on the original storefront design, and be operable, unless evidence of a building's original awning suggests otherwise. Always fit the awning within the storefront opening. Awnings should never extend continuously across several storefronts. Choose a water-repellent canvas or vinyl-coated canvas material; aluminum awnings or canopies are generally inappropriate. A wide variety of canvas colors are available, and you should pay special attention to choosing a color or color combination that coordinates with your building and its surroundings.

To be historically appropriate, and to allow ample clearance above the sidewalk areas, awnings may need to cover or conceal decorative transoms containing prism glass or stained glass. The use of bubble, concave, or convex awning forms were not common to early storefront design and should be avoided. Vinyl coated fabric, fixed metal, transparent or opaque vinyl or wood awnings are inappropriate. Awnings that are backlit are not acceptable.

## References

The following publications contain more detailed information about windows.

*Preservation Brief #3—Conserving Energy in Historic Buildings*

*Preservation Brief #9—The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows*

*Preservation Brief #10—Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork*

*Preservation Brief #11—Rehabilitation of Historic Storefronts*

*Preservation Brief #13—The Repair and Thermal Upgrading of Historic Steel Windows*



*Awnings have been used since the 19th century for storefronts in Northfield's commercial district. The application of appropriate new canvas awnings is encouraged.*

## Architectural Details

Architectural details are among the most distinctive elements which identify the different styles in downtown Northfield. Brackets, bulkheads, cornices, columns, pilasters, decorative moldings, and window hoods were used extensively to embellish buildings. These features are crucial to the historic and architectural character of the building.

Architectural details should be retained on existing structures within the historic downtown. New construction should mirror existing details, or display contemporary details that harmonize with its neighbors. It is essential that architectural detailing be carefully maintained in order to ensure its long term survival. Modern artificial siding frequently covers cornices or window trim and involves the destruction of much architectural detail. This practice is not appropriate.

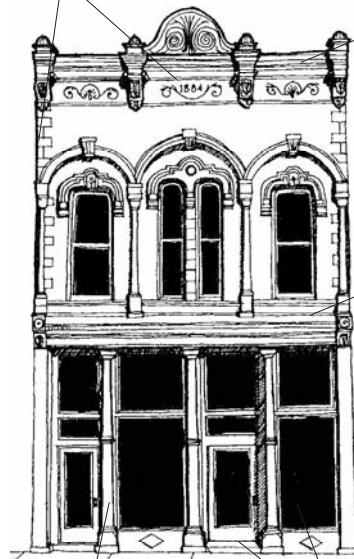
**Added Elements:** Necessities such as electric meters and boxes, condensing units, gas meters, solar panels, air conditioners, television antennae and satellite dishes are contemporary features in downtown Northfield. They can seriously impair the visual qualities of historic architecture if improperly located. All added elements should be located on the roof or to the rear of buildings in the district and screened by appropriate plantings or fencing. Solar panels and television aerials should be situated as far out of public view as possible.

## Paint Colors

Painting is the traditional method used to protect wooden and some metal and masonry buildings from the attack of moisture and other destructive environmental factors. It is more often thought of as a decorative element. Paint should provide the district's buildings with both a strong protective and a decorative surface layer. Oil based paints have traditionally been used on the district's wooden trim elements, and it is generally the best policy to continue using these paints on wood, rather than latex paints, unless careful preparations are made. Colors used originally vary with the age and style of the building. Earth tones (greens, dark reds, pale yellows and browns) were popular in the latter half of the 19th- century; lighter shades predominated in later decades. However, there is no clear rule for paint colors in a stylistically mixed group of buildings like those in the district, other than to avoid bright or unusual colors. Those who desire precise guidance can perform, or hire a consultant to undertake, paint analysis to determine paint colors at a specific time in a building's history.

### Decorative Detailing

*Corner quoins, metal scrollwork, and date block all add texture to the upper facade*



**Building Cornice**  
*Visually crowns the building*

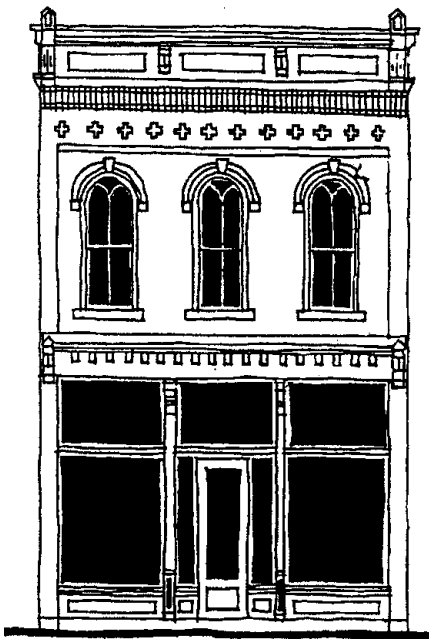
**Storefront Cornice**  
*Visually crowns the storefront*

**Pilasters**  
*Masonry pilasters provide the structural and visual framing for the first floor storefront*

**Storefront**  
*Original materials included wood, glass, and cast iron posts*

The City of Northfield strongly recommends that property owners keep their buildings regularly painted and follow these guidelines in selecting the type and color of paint.

It is recommended that the elements of a building be painted to utilize colors consistent with an integrated design for all material and color choices of the entire exterior. Typically, trim elements that have the same function on the exterior receive same or similar colors: for example, all window and door frames are the same color, or cornices use the same or similar colors. The window sash and doors can be painted a darker color than the walls and trim. Avoid painting masonry that is not painted. Prepare the surface to be painted by removing all loose paint and sanding all rough edges that remain. Prime the surface with a high quality oil-base primer and follow with two finish coats of oil-base paint.



**Paint Color Hierarchy**

### **Minor Trim**

- Window sash
- Doors
- Storefront frame
- Small details on cornices, window hoods, and bulkheads

### **Major Trim**

- Building cornice
- Window hoods
- Window frame
- Storefront cornice
- Storefront columns
- Bulkheads

### **References**

The following publications contain more detailed information about painting.

*Preservation Brief #10—Exterior Paint Problems of Historic Woodwork*

*Paint in America : The Colors of Historic Buildings* by Roger W. Moss (Editor), Preservation Press, Washington D.C.

## Rear Entrances

In planning downtown improvements, the "backs" of buildings should be considered for potential secondary business entrances. In Northfield you can see businesses taking advantage of secondary entrances along the Cannon River Commons and in the 400 block east of Division Street. These alleyways and pedestrian walkways not only improve customer access from the parking areas, but also significantly enhance pedestrian circulation throughout the Historic District.

Gaps between the historic building fabric, as seen along the 300 block west of Division Street, can provide access to secondary entrances. These passages can also lead to inviting exterior seating areas along improved alley and riverscapes. The development of these gaps is best approached as a cooperative effort between adjoining store owners or as public improvements.

When implementing design improvements to secondary facades, property owners should be aware of the main (street) facade elements that give identity to their building or business. Any improvements should reflect the design elements associated with their building—signage, awnings, paint colors, use of materials, etc. should be coordinated on all public facades of a business. However, it should be considered that sides and backs of buildings usually have different details, window sizes, various wall heights, and different brick colors, all of which clearly indicate a distinctive character without being repeats of the front facades.



## SIGNAGE AND LIGHTING



*Backlit plastic signs and underlit awnings with lettering are inappropriate for historic buildings.*



*Flat signboards, low-profile projecting signs, painted lettering on the display windows and awning valance are appropriate.*

Signage is an essential element in any commercial district. Anonymity is clearly not good for business. Unfortunately, signage has often been one of the most disfiguring elements in the urban landscape. A visual clutter of oversized and ill-positioned signs presents a negative image for the entire street.

A business' sign is important not only as an identifier, but equally significant as an expression of an image for the business. Don't underestimate the value of quality signage. A clear message, presented with style, will encourage passersby to venture in. Money spent on quality signage is usually money well spent.

When thinking about signage, consider the following:

### Size and placement

In a densely built downtown area, signage should be directed at and scaled to the pedestrian. Don't assume that the largest sign is the best. Pay particular attention to how your sign relates to your building. Look for logical signage locations on your facade.

The best location for signage is at the continuous flat wall areas above storefront display windows and below the upper level windows. Where such space is limited by the location of the storefront cornice, signage can be mounted directly on top of the cornice, even with a slight tilt downward as shown by the historic photographs for some buildings. Don't cover windows, doors, or architectural ornament. A good sign looks like it belongs where it was placed. It should be an extension of the overall design of your facade.

### Message and design

A good sign is simple and direct. Don't be tempted to say too much. Choose a letter style or graphic treatment that projects your image and is clear and easy to read. Coordinate sign colors with the colors of your building. Remember that visual clutter will only dilute your message.

A good sign can take many forms. It may be painted on a flat panel, or it might have a sculptural quality. Individual letters might be applied to the facade. Logos or lettering can be painted, stenciled, or engraved on windows. Even the valance of an awning can be an excellent signboard. Sign design that brings

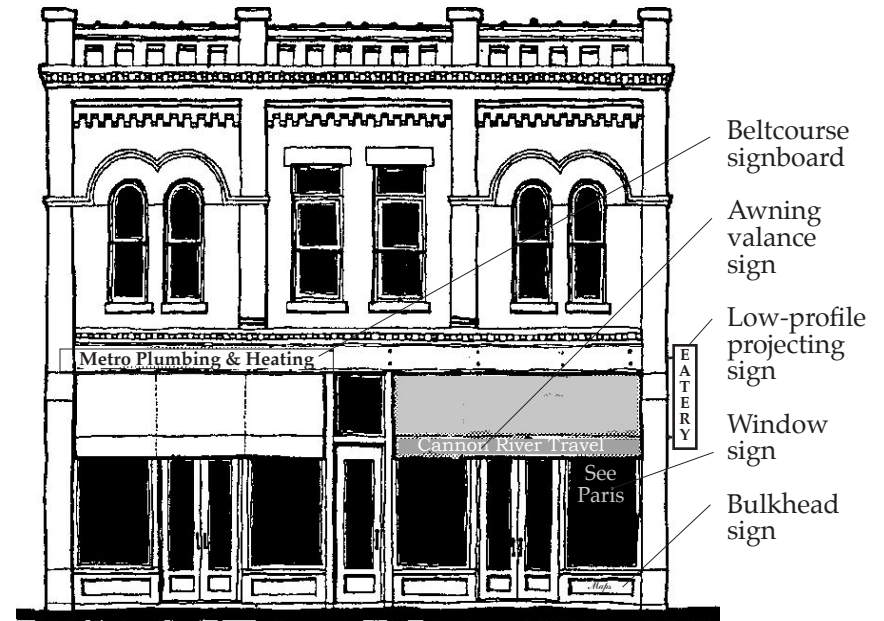
additional identity to storefront businesses, by using three-dimensional signs, symbols, or representations of the business (mortar and pestle, scales of justice, barber poles, etc.) is encouraged. Small two-sided signs that project over the sidewalk are excellent for communication for pedestrians. Neon signs inside shop windows are usually appropriate and possess a charm that can be very attractive, if not overused. Neon signage is not appropriate on the building exterior, however, unless it was an original feature of the building. Lighting for other kinds of signage should be limited to direct illumination by incandescent lamps.

## Inappropriate signs

Certain sign types are generally considered inappropriate in an historic commercial district. These would include large projecting signs, rooftop signs, and internally illuminated awnings and signs. Replacement of these kinds of signs should be strongly considered in planning for rehabilitation. To address this issue, the City of Northfield has adopted a sign ordinance that regulates signs within the historic downtown district.

## General Sign Guidelines

- Signs should be made of traditional materials such as wood or metal panels with painted or ornamental metal lettering.
- Signage should be sized appropriately and in proportion to its building.
- Signs and graphics should have colors that are coordinated with the overall building colors and the colors of the adjacent buildings.
- Signs should have a lettering type face generally of the era of the building, such as letters in a serif or script style for the earliest buildings, and with the possible use of more modern sans-serif style lettering for more recent buildings. However, each sign shall contain no more than two lettering styles, and the lettering shall not occupy more than 60 percent of the total sign area. Where businesses are required to utilize a corporate image or the sign lettering style and/or color is part of the business identity, the corporate image may be acceptable by utilizing other mitigating historic sign design features such as a raised sign boarder, dimensional letters, small lettering size and scale.
- Signage should be placed at traditional sign locations including the storefront beltcourse, upper facade walls, hanging or mounted inside windows, or projecting from the face of the building.
- Signs should not conceal any architectural features.



- Signage mounting brackets and hardware should be anchored into mortar, not masonry.
- Signs which are lit should have concealed lighting—spot or up-lit lighting for signs is recommended.
- Internally-lit or flashing signs are not appropriate for historic commercial districts.



*While neon lighting is generally discouraged, if applied on a well-designed, low-profile sign, it may be permitted.*

## General Lighting Guidelines

- Commercial sign lighting fixtures should be simple in design or concealed.
- Concealed light fixtures or fixtures appropriate to the building's period are encouraged.
- Spot or up-lit lighting for signs is recommended.
- Light fixtures should be low profile and have minimal projection from building face.
- Lighting should not conceal any architectural features.
- The light source should not be visible from the public right-of-way.
- Incandescent illumination is the most appropriate light source for historic commercial signage.
- "Historic" theme light fixtures such as "Colonial" coach lanterns are not appropriate to the Northfield Historic District.
- Internally-lit plastic signs and awning are not appropriate.
- Flashing lights are not appropriate for historic commercial districts.
- Light fixture mounting brackets and hardware should be anchored into mortar, not masonry.
- Neon signage is generally not appropriate on the building exterior, unless it was an original feature of the building, has in itself become a distinguishing feature identified with the building or its use, or is of special artistic merit as a symbolic or representational sign.



## NEW DOWNTOWN CONSTRUCTION

Much has been written (and argued) on the issue of new construction in historic downtowns. An exhaustive discussion of the issue could fill a book and is beyond the scope of this guide. However, the general principle to follow is that new buildings should look new.

B. Clarkson Schoettle of the Main Street Center has most succinctly summarized the other basic design considerations as follows:

### Proportions of the Facade

The average height and width of the surrounding buildings determines a general set of proportions for an infill structure or the bays of a larger structure.

### Composition

The composition of the infill facade (that is, the organization of its parts) should be similar to that of surrounding facades.

Rhythms that carry throughout the block (such as window spacing) should be incorporated into the new facade.

### Proportions of the Openings

The size and proportion of window and door openings of an infill building should be similar to those on surrounding facades.

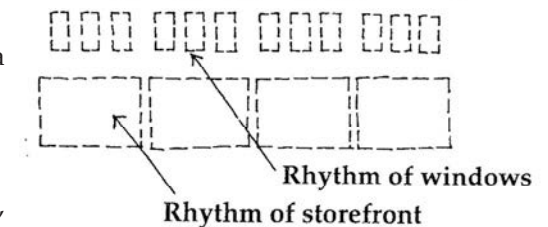
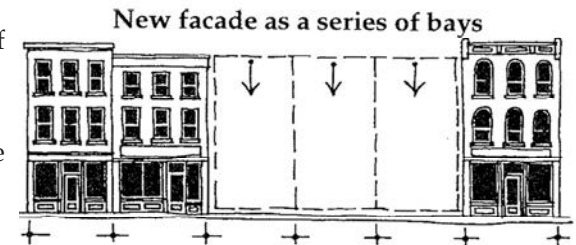
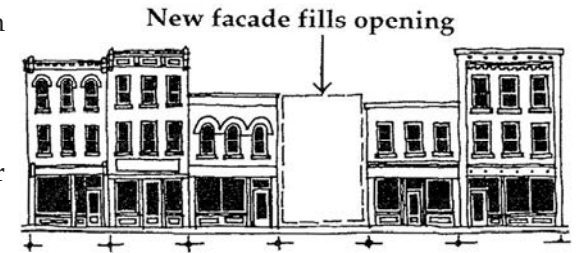
The same applies to the ratio of window area to solid wall for the facade as a whole.

The infill building should fill the entire space and reflect the characteristic rhythm of facades along the street.

If the site is large, the mass of the facade can be broken into a number of smaller bays, to maintain a rhythm similar to the surrounding buildings.

### Detailing

Infill architecture should reflect some of the detailing of surrounding buildings in window shapes, cornice lines, and brick work.



### **Materials**

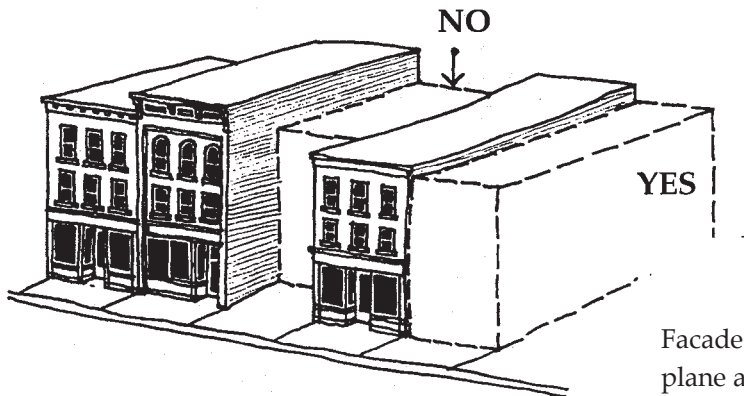
An infill facade should be composed of materials similar to adjacent facades. The new building should not stand out from the others.

### **Color**

Colors utilized should relate to each other in a coherent and consistent design, and also be selected in response to the existing materials and colors of surrounding buildings. Color selections for each building will include all the visible elements on the exterior, in order to achieve an integrated and coordinated design approach; and, thus it will include such elements as: the wall materials, accessory items such as flashing and hardware, all the trim components around doors, windows, at cornices and applied panels; the painted or pre-finished components such as windows and doors; and for awnings, signs and exterior lighting fixtures.

### **Building Setback**

The new facade should be flush with its neighbors.



Facade is set on the same plane as the adjacent buildings

## NEW BUILDING MATERIALS

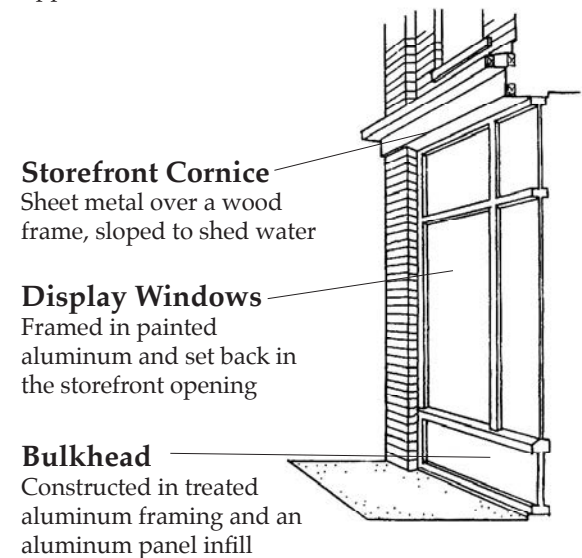
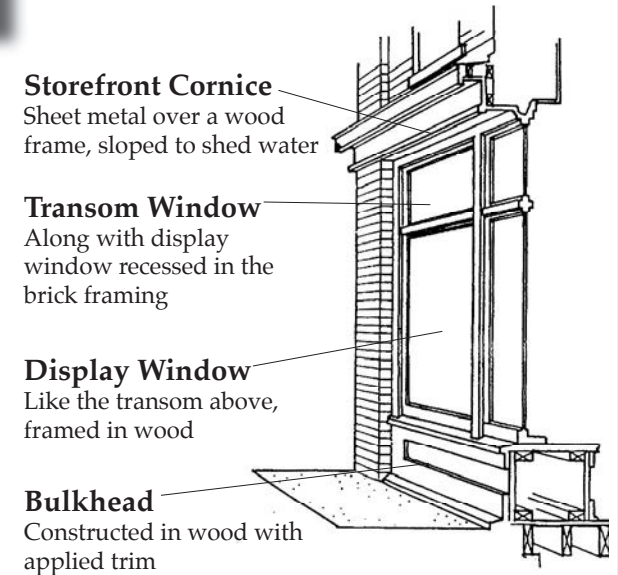
While the commercial property owner is encouraged to use traditional materials in the reconstruction of missing or altered building elements, often it is economically infeasible. Therefore, the owner may consider using newer building materials that emulate the appearance of the traditional elements.

When designing a new storefront for your commercial property, you should meet with the Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission to determine what contemporary building materials are acceptable and available.

**The traditional storefront** is generally constructed of a combination of materials, such as wood framing, plywood moldings, metal flashing, and plate glass. The typical elements of the storefront were the metal-clad window crown or cornice, the wood framed transom window, the wood framed display window, and the wood or metal bulkhead. The window and bulkhead are generally set back in the storefront opening at least six inches.

**The reconstructed storefront** can create the same “look” using newer building materials such as insulating glass and aluminum framing. However, the proportions and placement of the different elements need to closely match the elements of the original storefront.\*

\* Excerpts from *Keeping Up Appearances* from the National Trust for Historic Preservation



## APPLYING THE GUIDELINES TO NORTHFIELD'S BUILDINGS

The following examples were selected to illustrate the applications of the design guidelines. These examples display the variety of architectural styles found in downtown Northfield and can be used as a guide to what type of improvement might be appropriate for other buildings that are similar in design.

### *Division Street South*

- 306 Alex Marshall Building**—This two-story commercial building has had its storefront dramatically altered with two sweeping brick-arched openings framed beside arched door openings.
- 309 Arcade Building**—This two-story commercial building has had its storefront dramatically altered to give it a "modern" appearance.
- 311-313 Northfield News Building**—A two-story brick commercial block displays its original simple elegance on the second story facade and has its first story modified with two, very different, mid-20th century storefronts.
- 321 First Mergen Building**—This simple two-story commercial structure's brick facade has been covered in plaster. During the renovation in the later half of the 20th century, the upper story lost one of its three symmetrically placed windows.
- 418-420 Morris Building**—This two-story stone commercial block has lost all of its original architectural integrity. Nothing remains of its elegantly arched storefront and balanced fenestration.
- 506 Onstad Building (North)**—A two-story brick building that retains most of its original second story architectural treatment. The storefront has been "modernized" in the mid-late 20th century. The dramatic modification retained the original bay spacing.
- 508 Onstad Building (South)**—A two-story brick building, with stone banding, still displays much of its original fenestration. However, the upper-story windows have been partially infilled to accommodate smaller stock windows.

517 This modest, 20th-century brick building, which is located outside the Historic District but within the adjacent commercial zone, has had its original storefront modified considerably. The upper story remains intact.

516 This original "Boomtown" style structure, with its squared-off, "false front" has gone through many modifications through time.

### *Bridge Square*

15 **Second Dickson Building**—This simple, but elegant one-story structure has been serving the Northfield community with barber services since it was constructed at the turn of the century.

### *Water Street South*

301 This two-story, wood-frame "Boomtown" structure facade has been completely covered with modern materials, significantly diminishing the structure's simple beauty.

304 **Law Building**—A two-story Victorian commercial block, with modified storefronts. The building has, also, lost its original parapet detailing.

## EXISTING CONDITION

### 306 Division Street South The Alex Marshall Building

Constructed in 1932, this building retains its original upper-story fenestration and parapet. The storefront, however, has been completely modified with brick arches.

The original storefront has been removed and replaced with a modern treatment. The building probably displayed two storefronts with side entrances to the second story units.



## PROPOSED RENOVATION

Inspect roofing and flashing.

Repair, clean and tuckpoint the upper story brick as necessary.

Place signage over the transoms and awnings.



Hang retractable canvas awnings over the display windows and the store entrances.

Remove the modern, brick-arched storefronts.

Build storefronts with recessed central doorways, large display windows, transoms above, and bulkhead below.

Replace the modern aluminum door sets with wood and glass doors.

The designs of the apartment doors and the shop doors should suggest different uses.

## EXISTING CONDITION

### 309 Division Street South The Arcade Building

Constructed in the late 19th century, this building retains its original upper-story arched windows with cut glass transoms.

The storefront, however, has been completely modified and "modernized."

The original crowning cornice has been removed.

The signboard area, between the storefront and the upper-story, has been covered in plaster.

The original storefront has been removed and replaced with a modern treatment. The brick framework on the storefront has been covered with stucco, and three modern arch openings define the original bays of the commercial entrance.







## PROPOSED RENOVATION

Inspect roofing and flashing.

Build a decorative cornice above the second story windows.

Repair, clean and tuckpoint the upper-story brick as necessary.

Place signboards over storefront.

Install a retractable canvas awnings that is compatible with the district.

Reconstruct the original storefront with display windows, and center recessed doorway.

## EXISTING CONDITION

### 311-313 Division Street South The Northfield News Building

Constructed in 1883, this simple commercial block retains most of its second-story detailing.

The two original storefronts, which would have been originally similar in layout, have been modified over time to identify two separate businesses.

An historic picture reveals that the Northfield News Building has primarily been modified only at the storefront level.

The building retains its pressed metal cornice with modillions and dentals, original upper-level fenestration, and original brick and stone banding.

The original storefronts were replaced with the modern compositions in the mid-20th century.



## PROPOSED RENOVATION

Inspect roofing and flashing.

Repair, clean and repaint the cornice as necessary.

Tuckpoint, repair and clean brick and stone as necessary.

Repair and repaint existing upper-story windows if possible. Replacement windows should match the original window design in dimensions and profile.



Place signboards over storefront.

Hang retractable canvas awnings over the display windows and the store entrances.

Replace the variety of small windows with a larger display windows with transoms above.

Replace the modern doors with wood and glass doors, and transoms above.

The designs of the apartment door and the shop doors should suggest the different uses.

## EXISTING CONDITION

### 321 Division Street South The First Mergen Building

Constructed in 1882, this two-story commercial block retains little of its original appearance. The original brick facade has been covered in stucco and lost most detailing.

The cornice and one second-story window have removed.

The sign design and application is inappropriate for an historic district.

The original storefront has been modified with a down-sized display window.



## PROPOSED RENOVATION



Inspect roofing and flashing.

Install a decorative cornice appropriate to the district and the original design.

Clean and repaint the upper facade with a more appropriate warm color.

Repaint the second story window crowns with a subtle accent color.

Replace the missing window to match the original existing windows.

Repair and repaint existing windows, if possible. Replacement windows should match the original window design in dimensions and profile.

Hang a signboard directly above the display windows.

Hang a canvas, retractable awning over the display windows and store entrances.

Reconstruct the original storefront with display windows, and side recessed doorway.

Unfortunately, when a brick building is covered in stucco, there usually is irreversible damage done to the facade. Therefore, it is generally recommended that the stucco be cleaned, not removed.

# EXISTING CONDITION

## 418-420 Division Street South The Morris Building

Constructed in 1879, this native stone building once displayed an elegant arched storefront and a very large, bracketed cornice.



The decorative cornice has been removed and upper-story has been covered with stucco.

The elegant, arched windows on the upper-story have been removed.

The smaller dentilated cornice of the one-story building to the north had been removed.

Inappropriate siding has been applied to the original signboard area .

The storefronts have been reconstructed with modern brick and aluminum display windows and doors.

Air conditioners project out over the entrances.



## PROPOSED RENOVATION



Inspect roofing and flashing.

Install decorative, bracketed cornice.

If possible, remove upper-story stucco.

Tuckpoint, repair and clean stone as necessary.

Replace the upper-story windows to reflect the original fenestration in dimensions and profile. New windows should be double insulated.

Install new cornice to one-story building.

Apply new signboard over the storefront on the one-story structure.

Hang canvas, retractable awnings over the display windows and the store entrances.

Reconstruct storefront with display windows, recessed doorway and side entrances with appropriate materials.

## EXISTING CONDITION

### 506 Division Street South Onstad Building (North)

Built in 1887, this two-story, brick, Italianate commercial building retains its upper-story integrity. The brick crown and the heavily bracketed cornice help define the building's style.

Although the storefront of this fine building has been considerably modified, and the appearance is now somewhat "dated," the new treatment acknowledges the original symmetry and bay rhythm of the building.

New, more appropriate signage and lighting would make this building more compatible with its neighbors in the district.





## PROPOSED RENOVATION



Inspect roofing and flashing.

Tuckpoint, repair, clean and repaint brick as necessary.

Repair existing windows if necessary.

Remove inappropriate modern light fixtures.

Install a signboard over the storefront.

Hang a canvas, retractable awning between the transoms and the display windows and store entrance.

Reconstruct the original storefront with large display windows, a center doorway, transoms above and bulkhead below.

## EXISTING CONDITION

### 508 Division Street South Onstad Building (South)

Constructed in 1910, this ornate commercial block retains its upper-story fenestration, and its basic storefront opening.

The upper-story window openings have been partially infilled and the tall windows replaced with short, stock windows.

The original storefront has been replaced with a modern, aluminum surround display windows and commercial door.



## PROPOSED RENOVATION



Inspect roofing and flashing.

Tuckpoint, repair and clean brick and stone as necessary.

Remove the infill panels and the short windows. Replace the windows with full-size, tall, one-over-one windows. New windows should be double insulated.

Place the signboard directly above the display windows.

A canvas, retractable awning should be hung over the display windows and the store entrance. If desired, the awning could stretch across the entire storefront, including over the apartment entrance.

Reconstruct the original storefront with display windows, recessed doorway and side entrances.

The designs of the apartment door and the shop doors should suggest the different uses.

## EXISTING CONDITION

### 517 Division Street South Outside the Historic District

Built after the turn of the century, this simple commercial block retains its upper-story integrity.

The original storefront has been replaced with small modern glass windows, small awning, stucco surround and stock metal doors .



## PROPOSED RENOVATION



Inspect roofing and flashing.

Repair, clean and tuckpoint the upper story brick as necessary.

Place signage over the awning.

Hang a canvas, retractable awning over the display windows and the store entrance.

Build a compatible period storefront with larger display windows.

Replace the modern metal doors with wood and glass doors.

The designs of the apartment door and the shop doors should suggest different uses.

# EXISTING CONDITION

## 518 Division Street South Outside the Historic District

This building appears to be quite old with its "Boomtown" false front. It possibly functioned as a wagon shop with a central door opening.

The original upper facade has been covered with vertical wood siding.

Backlit plastic signage is not compatible with the signage of the historic downtown.

The original central opening has been infilled with brick and modern doors.



## PROPOSED RENOVATION



Inspect roofing and flashing.

Remove the wood siding off the upper facade.

Repair, clean and tuckpoint brick as necessary.

Place signage over the transoms and awnings.

Hang a canvas, retractable awning over the windows.

Open original central opening and fill with glass and new doors.

## EXISTING CONDITION

### 15 Bridge Square

#### Second Dickson Building (1900)

This simple one-story, brick building retains its original door and window placement. However through time, it has had its facade modified with newer materials.







## PROPOSED RENOVATION

Inspect roofing and flashing.

Remove modern vertical wood siding.

Replace decorative cornice.

Clean and repair brick as necessary.

Place a signboard over the storefront.

Reconstruct the original storefront with display windows, and side recessed doorway.

Hang a canvas, retractable awning over the display window and shop entrance.

## EXISTING CONDITION

### 301 Water Street South Outside the Historic District

This early commercial building displays a "Boomtown" facade upper facade.

However, over time, the entire facade has been covered with modern materials, and the building has lost most of its original architectural integrity.



## PROPOSED RENOVATION



Inspect roofing and flashing.

Remove the modern metal siding.

Replacement windows should match the original window design in dimensions and profile. New windows should be two-over-two, double-hung and insulated.

Place the signboard over the storefront.

Hang a canvas, retractable awnings over the display windows and store entrances.

Reconstruct the original storefronts with display windows, doorways, and transoms.

## EXISTING CONDITION

### 304 Water Street South The Law Building (1899)

This early commercial block once housed a theater called "The Gem." While the building retains its original bay structure, the original storefronts have been considerably altered.



## PROPOSED RENOVATION



Inspect roofing and flashing.

Rebuild the parapet wall at the roof line.

Tuckpoint and repair brick and stone as necessary.

Repair and clean any remaining wood trim.

Place commercial signage on a flush signboard of the transoms.

Add retractable canvas awnings over the entrance way.

Construct large display windows and transoms above, and bulkhead below for the side bays.

The designs of the apartment door and shop door should suggest different uses.

## PHASING A REHABILITATION PROJECT

When planning the renovation of your storefront, remember that it may make financial sense to phase the project over time. The completion of each phase will increase the aesthetic and actual value of your building, while getting you one step closer to the completion of your project. The following example demonstrates how the phasing could be implemented.

### Existing Condition

The classical cornice needs cleaning and painting.

The second-story windows are in poor condition and need painting.

The upper story brickwork needs some cleaning and repair.

The signboard area has been covered with modern panels.

The storefronts have been modified with modern treatments obscuring the original rhythm and symmetry of the building bays.

### Phase 1

This phase may include:

Cleaning and repainting the decorative cornice.

Repairing, cleaning and repainting the double hung windows.

Repairing and tuckpointing the brick as necessary.

Rebuilding or repairing lost architectural features such as the banding and brackets above the storefronts.



### Phase 2

Reestablish the storefront bay configuration by exposing piers.  
Apply appropriate signage on a flush signboard above the storefronts.

### Phase 3

Rebuild storefronts as originally designed with large display windows  
with transom above and a bulkhead below.  
Place retractable canvas awnings over the new display windows.



## APPENDIX I— Inventory of Historic District Properties/Adjacent Properties

### Downtown Northfield Historic District

#### Bridge Square

##### *North Side*

- 11 Shatto Building (built 1878)
- 13 Crosby Building (built 1894)
- 15 Second Dickson Building (built about 1900)
- 17 Boston Shoe Store (built 1879)
- 19 Aldsworth Building (built 1893)
- 25 Citizens Bank (built 1966)

##### *South Side*

- 14 Post Office (built 1936)
- 16 Schmidt Building (built about 1880)

#### Division Street South

##### *West Side between Second Street and Third Street*

- 210 - 214 Archer House (built 1877)
- 220 The Nutting Block Building (built 1893)

##### *West Side between Third Street and Fourth Street*

- 300 Sitze Building (built 1886)
- 302 Original City Hall (built 1876)
- 304 YMCA Building (built 1885)
- 306 Alex Marshall Building (built 1932)
- 310 Bushnell Building (built 1897)
- 312 Tosney Building (built 1882)
- 314 McKay Building (built 1925)
- 320 Third Mergen Building (built 1901)

##### *East Side between Third Street and Fourth Street*

- 309 Arcade Building (built 1895)
- 311-313 Northfield News Building (built about 1883-84)
- 315 Lockrem-Sumner Building (built 1872)

- 317 French Building (built 1872)
  - 319 (former Clark Building - built 1889, demolished about 1986):
  - 321 First Mergen Building (built 1882)
  - 323-325 Second Mergen Building (built in 1883 & 1886)
  - 329 Nutting Building (built 1889)
- West Side between Fourth Street and Fifth Street*
- 408 Scriver Building (built 1868)
  - 410 Rebstock Bakery Building (built 1885)
  - 412 Festler Building (built 1921)
  - 414 Kingman Building (built 1873)
  - 416 Lawler Building (built about 1872)
  - 420 Morris Building (built 1879)
  - 422 Bjoraker Building (built about 1870)
- East Side between Fourth Street and Fifth Street*
- 403-405 Central Block (built 1893)
  - 407 Gress Building (built 1893)
  - 409 Wheeler Building (built 1875)
  - 411-413 Hamre Building (built 1886)
  - 415 Skinner Block (built late 1860s)
  - 419 Melwin Building (built 1899)
  - 421 Lockwood Opera House (built 1872)
  - 425-427 McLaughery Block (built 1882)
- West Side between Fifth Street and Sixth Street*
- 500 Holland Block (built 1884) (also: 101-103 Fifth Street West)
  - 504 Olson Building (built 1890)
  - 506 Onstad Building (built 1887)
  - 508 Onstad Building (built before 1910)
  - 510-512 Northstar Hotel Building (built before 1900)



*East Side between Fifth Street and Sixth Street*

- 501 Scofield Building (built 1868)
- 503 Kelly Building (built 1907)
- 505 Henderson Building (built 1908)
- 507-509 Nelson Buildings (built 1922 and 1945)

**Water Street South**

*West Side*

- 300 Plummer Corner (built 1903)
- 304 Law Building (built 1899)

*East Side*

- 311 State Bank Building (built 1910)
- 305-309 Ebel Block (built 1894)
- 319 Ames Mill (built 1869)

**Washington Street South**

- 210 Carnegie Library (built 1910)
- 316 Ware Auditorium (built 1899)

**Fifth Street East**

- 105 McLaughry Tenement (built 1898)

**Fourth Street East**

- 105 Nutting Addition (built 1903)
- 107 Carpenter Building (built 1899)
- 109 Lyceum Building (built 1857)
- 111 Sitze Building (built 1894)

**Commercial Areas Adjacent to the Historic District**

The following properties are not located within the historic district, however they appear to have some historical merit and change to these properties may be guided following this manual. (See map on page 2)

**Division Street South:** 205, 209, 211, 301, 303, 305, 307, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 528, 601, 618

**Washington Street South:** 304, 314, 400-402

**Water Street South:** 205, 207, 217, 219, 301, 303, 411, 501, 507, 515, 517

**Third Street West:** 107

**Fourth Street East:** 114

**Fifth Street East:** 108

**Fifth Street West:** 113, 115

**Sixth Street West:** 107, 109, 111

## *APPENDIX II— Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation*

The following standards are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

### Resources

The following publications contains more detailed information about the Standards.

Weeks, Jay D. and Anne E. Grimmer, *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Illustrated Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstruction of Historic Buildings*. Washington, D.C.: Heritage Preservation Services, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1995. 188 pp.

Birnbaum, Charles A., FASLA, and Christine Capella-Peters, Editors, *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*. Washington, D.C.: Heritage Preservation Services, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1996. 148 pp.

## APPENDIX III— Public Signage

Few communities in Minnesota have addressed the issue of public signage within or around historic districts. The community must balance the desire for a visually appealing downtown with the necessity to maintain the public's safety and to effectively direct traffic flow. As a rule, public signage should be clear and use conventional shapes, colors, and reflectivity. Public signage falls into three categories: traffic signs, limit signs, and directional/informational signs.

### **Traffic Signs**

Traffic signs are the most critical to downtown Northfield. They ensure a smooth and orderly flow of traffic and minimize the possibility of accidents. They must conform to the *Minnesota Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MMUTCD) from the Minnesota Department of Transportation. While considerably limited, there is some latitude in the design of these signs. Determining minimum requirements and reducing redundancy is necessary to making Downtown Northfield more attractive.

### **Limit Signs**

Limit signs, such as parking limits, handicap, and no parking zones, although not as critical to safety, still need to be visually pleasing. These signs also have more latitude in their design. They should be uniform in style. They should be prominently displayed and large enough to be easily read, but should not overpower their surroundings. Using professionally designed signs and posts and placement, the public signage can enhance the overall appearance of downtown Northfield.

### **Directional/Informational Signs**

Informational signs include historic district directions and announcements, public parking, and other directional information to guide people to key areas in downtown Northfield. These signs have little regulation and, therefore, the most latitude in design. They still need to be professionally designed, clear, and uniform with the other signage in downtown.

- Less is more. Using the least required signage in downtown will help keep the appearance from being cluttered or overpowering. Researching the minimum requirements and potential waivers is imperative for controlling the proliferation of public signage.
- All public signage within the Northfield Historic District needs to be uniform and of high quality design and construction.
- Signage can be effectively placed on existing decorative light posts and on well designed sign posts.
- Signage, as well as banners and other temporary displays, should be color coordinated with a limited palette of colors complementary to those used for the store awnings. Turn-of-the-century colors tended to be muted and earth-tone based. Most major paint companies have paint chip charts of "historical" colors.
- Uniform signage should be developed to identify all public parking lots. Signs should be large enough and prominently displayed, but not overpower the surroundings. Using an easily identifiable logo helps the motorist find their way to the lots.