

City of Albert Lea

National Historic Commercial District
Architectural Guidelines for Historic Preservation



Heritage Preservation Commission



Purpose of Handbook

The Heritage Preservation Commission of the City of Albert Lea is proud to present its Architectural Guidelines for Historic Preservation, for use within the City of Albert Lea National Historic Commercial District. The guidelines were adopted by the Heritage Preservation Commission in June 2005. This handbook will direct you through the application process for new construction or renovation in order to help you make changes within an historic context and contribute to the revitalization of the downtown business community.

The City of Albert Lea National Historic Commercial District was first established in 1987 and was comprised solely of Broadway Avenue. In 2004 it was expanded to incorporate most of the Central Business District. Buildings counted as contributing to the historic district are those more than 50 years old that have not undergone significant architectural changes, although the district's period of significance is limited to the years between 1874 and 1928. The State Historical Society and National Park Service consider downtown Albert Lea to be an excellent example of an historic commercial district that has been preserved for future generations to experience.

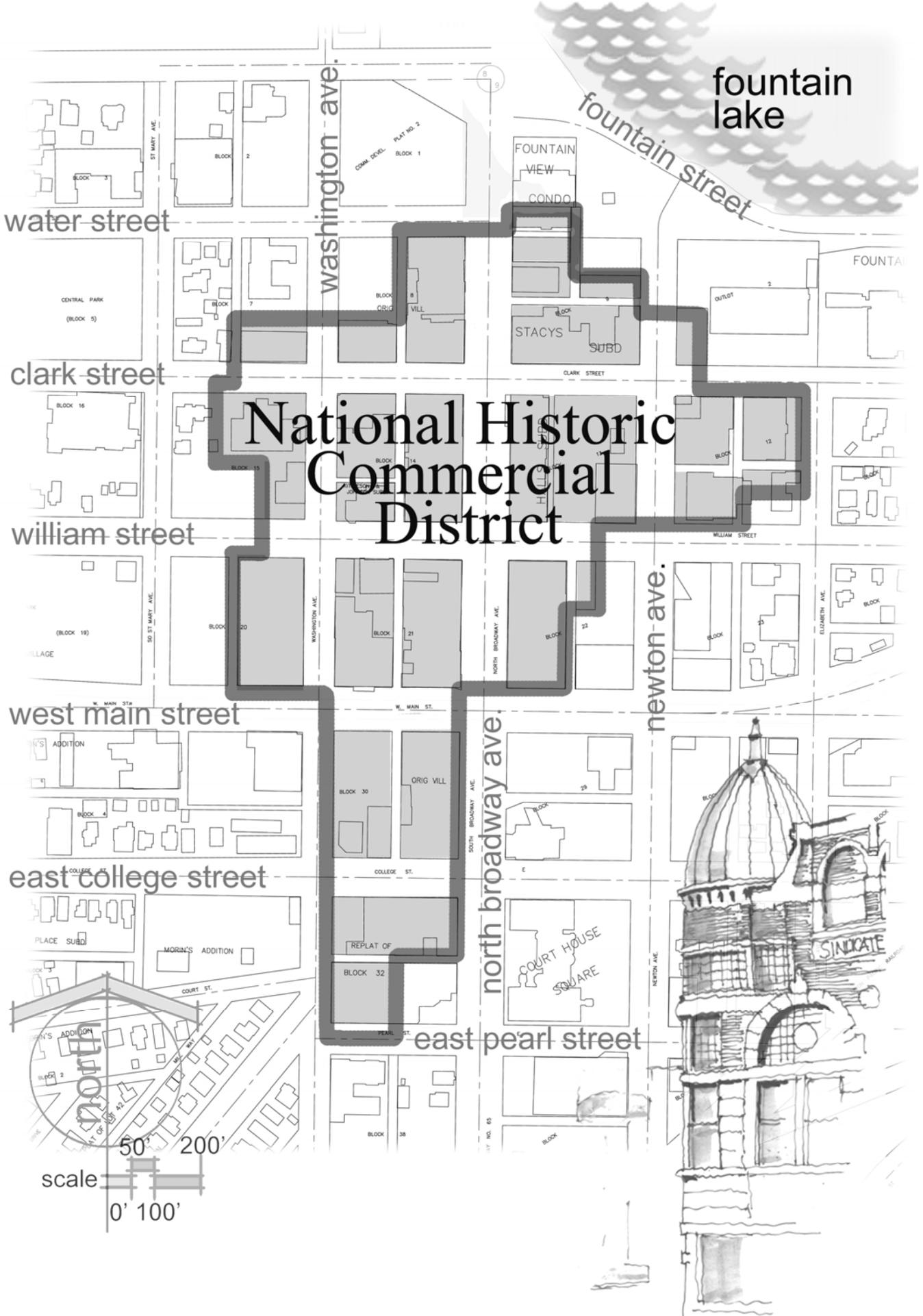
The staff of the City's Community Development Division is available to help you interpret this handbook and to assist and guide you in implementing a common vision to enhance the vitality of the downtown and historic district. They are eager to visit with you and to help facilitate a positive relationship in implementing this common vision.

The guiding purpose of the Heritage Preservation Commission is to promote an understanding of the history, beauty and architectural value that Albert Lea possesses and to restore the downtown to its earlier economic vitality, thereby attracting a broader customer base. The designation of the downtown as an historic district provides a regional and national marketing opportunity to create a unique point of interest.

The staff of the city's Community Development Division is available to help you interpret these guidelines and to answer any questions that might arise. We hope the inherent flexibility of the process will allow for creative, imaginative design while preserving historic attributes and maintaining a pedestrian downtown.

The City of Albert Lea is excited about the revitalization of its downtown as a vibrant business and heritage center.





fountain lake

fountain street

water street

washington ave.

clark street

National Historic Commercial District

william street

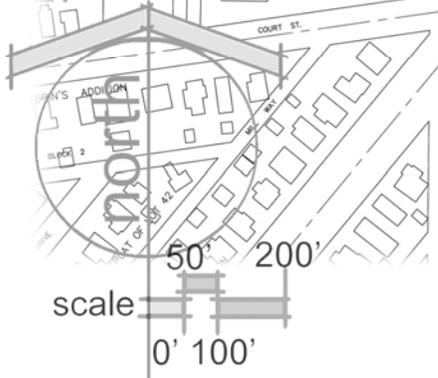
newton ave.

west main street

north broadway ave.

east college street

east pearl street



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Introduction to Architectural Design Standards

The City of Albert Lea has responded to constituents' overwhelming requests to stabilize, restore and rehabilitate its historic downtown. The Broadway Avenue portion of the downtown was designated as a National Commercial Historic District in 1987, and this district was expanded in 2004 to include Washington Avenue, Newton Avenue, Clark Street and William Street in the Central Business District. The Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) was created to oversee rehabilitation, restoration and redevelopment activities within the district. It is advised by the City Building Official and the Community Development Director. When an owner is interested in making building improvements the proposals are reviewed by the HPC, and building permits may be granted when the review process has been completed. Building permits are required for most improvements and all signs.

These standards are intended to ensure the coordinated design of building exteriors, additions and accessory structure exteriors to create visual harmony by minimizing adverse impacts on adjacent properties. These standards are further intended to cause the use of materials that are appropriate, sightly and of sufficient quality to maintain the property value and character of the district.

When considering your building project, determine whether the project will include any alterations to the building exterior (see guidelines on page 3). If exterior modification of any kind is required a proposal will need to be presented to the HPC. It is critical that you study the following architectural design standards, as they will help guide you through the design review process.



Design Principles

When to Submit an Application

A design review is required for the following situations:

1. Any remodeling or repair that changes the exterior appearance of the building including windows, doors, signs and fascia.
2. Moving a building.
3. Complete or partial demolition of a building.
4. Construction of a new building or addition to an existing building.
5. Construction of new walks, fences or parking facilities.
6. Site improvements if adjacent to or within view of the public rights-of-way.

Design Principles for New Construction

The guiding principle for new construction in the historic district of Albert Lea is to maintain the scale and character of present buildings. Infill buildings (a term used interchangeably with “new construction” in this handbook) must fit into the fabric of the overall streetscape and not present a jarring contrast with what is already there. The design guidelines for existing storefronts are also applicable to new construction projects. The height, massing, setback, materials and rhythm of new buildings should be compatible with surrounding structures. The use of artificial design details is recommended only in some cases of infill or small-scale construction.

Design Principles for Restoration and Rehabilitation

Many buildings in the historic district retain their original character. Many other buildings, however, have been altered so drastically since they were first constructed that little remains of their original design. Such buildings would benefit from restoration and/or rehabilitation. Rear walls and upper floors of older buildings sometimes show their original character, and from these areas one can imagine the original appearance of the fronts of these buildings. Old photographs are another important source of historic documentation, and an abundance of photographic evidence is available at the State Historic Preservation Office, the Freeborn County Historical Society and the Albert Lea Public Library.

To the extent possible, modification to storefronts and building façades should seek to remove inconsistent present layers of siding and signage in order to emphasize the design and materials of the original building. New designs may be appropriate if the building has been altered to the point that the original design has been destroyed. Any new design should respect the proportions as well as the detailing of the original design and should use materials that are consistent with those used in the original building. New design elements such as cloth awnings, flower boxes or signage that did not exist or which were not typically

used during the period when the building was constructed may be appropriate in order to give the building both color and character. Care should be taken, however, to avoid design elements that make a building appear to be from a period or style other than its own. Trademark buildings are prohibited, although trademark signs may be permissible if they do not disrupt the historic character of the district.

General principles for restoration and rehabilitation are taken from the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation:

- All work should be of a character and quality that maintains the distinguishing features of the building and its environment. The removal of original historic architectural features is prohibited.
- Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced whenever possible. In the event of replacement, new materials are required to match the original in composition, color, texture and appearance. Duplication of original design based on physical or pictorial evidence is preferable to making conjectures as to "period" designs or using parts of other buildings.
- Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship characteristic of structures of a period should be treated sensitively.
- If changes in the use of a building are to be made, they should be accomplished with minimum alteration of the building's structure and fabric.
- In general, it is expected that buildings will be restored to their original appearance. However, past alterations to buildings are sometimes significant because they reflect the history of both the building and the district. This significance should be respected, and restoration to an "original" appearance may not always be desirable. All buildings should be recognized as products of their own time. (Example: A building that was constructed in 1890 should resemble a building from 1890.)

Contextual Review

Contextual Approach

Rehabilitation, restoration and redevelopment activities within the historic district should be carried out in a manner sensitive to the historical context. A project proposal should demonstrate an effort to preserve the unique features of the original building. Existing elements inconsistent with a building's elevation should be removed rather than repaired, and the original building elevation should be restored. Project proposals must take into account a building's current use and adjacent historic context.

Pedestrian-Oriented Design

Proposals should demonstrate a commitment to maintaining pedestrian priority. Follow these guidelines when considering changes within the historic district:

- Blank walls, closed curtains and neglected storefronts should be avoided.
- Window displays should allow the customer a full view of the store interior. They should be attractive when viewed from both the sidewalk and the store interior and allow people in the store to see out.
- Natural light should be allowed to penetrate into the store interior.

Site Planning

Street Orientation

Identification of primary and secondary street frontage is required within the site plan drawing.

Setbacks

Identification of existing and proposed pedestrian and service access and adjacent property location is required within the site plan drawing.

Parking and Open Space

Identification of parking, parking access, landscape features, planters, light pole locations and open space is required within the site plan drawing. Follow these guidelines when considering the placement and design of parking areas:

- Parking lots should be located behind buildings in order to maximize retail space along storefronts.
- Parking lots should be screened from the street and sidewalk by plantings or walls. Walls are required to be at least 18 inches high.
- Parking should not be directly adjacent to public sidewalks. A minimum setback of five feet from the end of an automobile is required.
- The same care should be taken in the design of parking structures as with any other building regarding setback, height, proportions, façade openings, detailing and materials.



Architectural Review

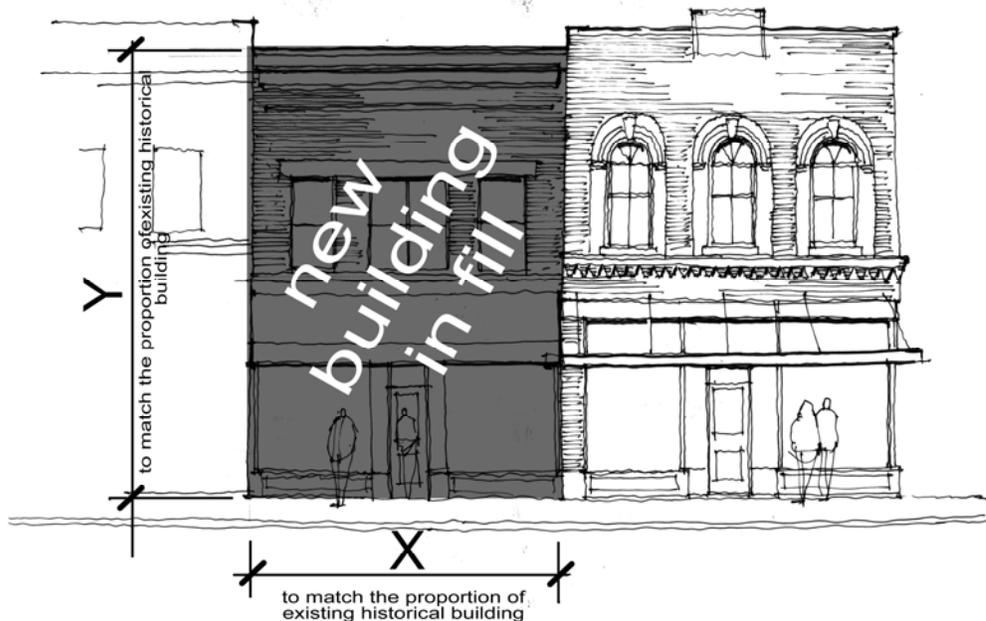
Building Mass and Organization

Building Height

Where proposed changes would alter building height, elevation or visual mass, the owner is required to provide appropriately scaled elevation drawings indicating proposed building height and the height of adjacent buildings. The height of infill buildings should be within range of the heights of neighboring buildings. New designs should maintain compatibility with adjacent cornice lines, floor-to-floor heights where these are strongly expressed, sign bands, and any other elements that serve to unify the street elevation as a whole.

Proportions and Openings

Where a proposal requires the alteration of a building's proportional integrity, the owner is required to provide appropriately scaled elevation drawings indicating existing and proposed building openings, including pedestrian entry, storefront opening and all window openings. The proportion of infill buildings should match the proportion of neighboring buildings.

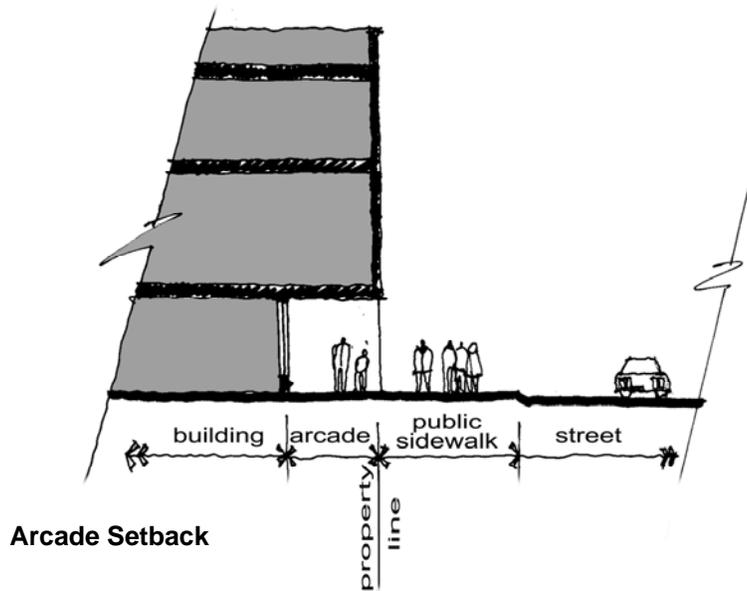


Façade Rhythm

Where a proposal requires the alteration of building structure, structural bays or façade rhythm, the owner is required to provide appropriately scaled elevation drawings indicating existing and proposed building structure, structural bays and façade rhythm of the subject building. The elevation drawings should indicate building materials, details and additive architectural features that would enhance the historic proportions and qualities of the façade.

Setback

Where a proposal includes new construction on a vacant lot, the owner is required to provide appropriately scaled elevation drawings indicating building setback. Infill buildings should be built to the front property line, flush to adjacent buildings. Arcades adjacent to sidewalks are encouraged to increase the effective width of narrow sidewalks and provide a sheltered pedestrian path along store display windows.



Alignment of Architectural Elements

Where a proposal requires the alteration of linear, horizontal or vertical detailing integral to a building elevation or to the continuity of adjacent structures, the owner is required to provide appropriately scaled elevation drawings indicating existing and proposed linear, horizontal or vertical detailing and details architecturally supporting the historic proportions of the façade.

Roofs and Upper Story Details

The predominant roof shape for historic buildings is flat (slightly sloped for drainage) with articulated parapets. These parapets are often embellished with brick detailing and may be stepped or sloped to achieve a visually interesting yet harmonious sequence along the building façade. Roofs for new construction should be flat or gently pitched and hidden behind parapet walls that articulate the rhythm of the building.

Where a proposal requests approval for the alteration of a building's roof, roof pitch, roof materials, roof cap or upper story details, the owner is required to provide appropriately scaled elevation drawings indicating existing and proposed roof and upper story details of the subject structure. Building materials, details, and additive architectural features of the existing and proposed roofline and upper story details should be indicated.

The Storefront

Components and Composition

Alteration or renovation of an historic building storefront requires the owner to provide appropriately scaled elevation drawings indicating existing and proposed storefront and transom articulation of the building. Building materials, details, added architectural features and storefront elevations should be indicated. The owner must demonstrate that every effort has been made to restore the subject building's storefront and architectural elements to their original state.

For guidelines regarding signage, please refer to the section on signage, beginning on page 13 of this manual.

Color

Colors and tones used in renovations or new construction should be compatible with color and tone patterns already established by adjacent recognized historic buildings. Caution should be exercised when choosing color and tone combinations, taking into account the goal of achieving an area-wide complementary blend of background colors combined with the limited use of selected primary and focal colors.

Lighting

Lighting should take into account the impact on the overall appearance of the district. Lighting may be used to illuminate building entrances, pedestrian walkways and advertising, but excessive lighting is prohibited. Submission of a coordinated lighting plan is required as part of the building plans and should provide information on each light fixture proposed, including fixture sections, lamp type and wattage. Light fixtures should be concealed or integrated into the overall design of the project, and light sources should be shielded from pedestrian or motorist view. Unshielded wall pack light fixtures are prohibited.

Awnings

Retractable awnings may be used to soften the appearance of a streetscape, shade buildings and merchandise and provide shelter to pedestrian walkways.

For detailed guidelines on the use of awnings, please refer to page 18.

Architectural Elements

Preservation of Historic Detailing

Architectural ornamentation is an important element contributing to the historic character of the district. Articulated tin cornices, corbelled brickwork and pronounced window lintels and sills are examples of ornamentation common in

the historic district. Characteristic architectural features may not be altered or removed from a building unless it is absolutely necessary. Building alterations should restore historic architectural details where appropriate. In cases where detailing has previously been removed, every effort should be made to restore the building's original appearance. When considering a building renovation, the use of historic photographic records is required.

Cornice

Where a proposal requires the alteration of a building's cornice or cornice detailing, the owner is required to provide appropriately scaled elevation drawings indicating existing and proposed cornice detail and articulation of the subject structure. Building materials, colors and details of the architectural cornice should be indicated. The owner must demonstrate that every effort has been made to restore the subject building cornice conditions to their original state.

Wall Materials

Wall materials should reflect the historic character of the subject property and adjacent historic structures. Where a proposal requires the alteration of a building's wall material, surface or surface articulation, the owner is required to provide appropriately scaled elevation drawings indicating existing and proposed wall articulation of the subject structure. Building materials, details and additive architectural features should be indicated. The owner must demonstrate that every effort has been made to restore the subject building's condition to its original historic state.

Where a proposal deals with new construction, infill building façades should be composed of materials similar to the original adjacent historic façades (e.g., local brick or stone). The use of exposed or painted concrete masonry units is prohibited. The use of materials that attempt to mimic traditional materials is also prohibited.

Façade Openings

Window and door openings should reflect materials, color, scale, proportions and historic detailing consistent with the historic character of the property. Where a proposal requires the alteration of window and/or door articulation or composition, the owner is required to provide appropriately scaled elevation drawings indicating existing and proposed window and/or door details and articulation of the subject structure. Building materials, details and additive architectural features should be indicated. The owner must demonstrate that every effort has been made to restore the window and/or door conditions to their original state.

Infill panels may not be used when providing new windows for existing masonry openings. Storefront restoration should return the façade to its original appearance, and the original façade may not be concealed.

Display and Transom Windows

Display windows are the link between pedestrians outside of a building and the business inside. For new construction, a minimum of 60 percent of the front street level façade, and 30 percent of side street or rear façades, is required to be transparent. Renovations should preserve the original size, division and shape of display windows. Reflective glass is prohibited, and mirrored or heavily tinted glass on the street level is also prohibited, as it would convey a conflicting modern appearance.

Transom windows are smaller windows located above display windows. Historically they functioned as early energy savers by allowing daylight to enter deep into the interior space of a building. When fully operable, they also allowed excessive heat to escape. Transom windows can still be found in many historic buildings underneath exterior cover-ups or above dropped ceilings. They should be retained whenever possible. If the ceiling inside a store has been lowered, it may be sloped up a maximum of five feet back to meet the transom.

Front Entrances

In historic buildings, commercial storefront entrances are typically recessed from the front plane of the structure, providing a sheltered transition area to the interior of the store, additional display space and emphasis on the location of the entrance. Recessed entries must be retained in existing buildings and are recommended in new storefront construction. Painted wood doors and wood framing are preferred. Aluminum doors and doorframes, aluminum windows, and accessories with a clear aluminum finish are not allowed, although colored anodized aluminum may be acceptable.

Piers, Pilasters and Building Frame

Where a proposal requires the alteration of piers, pilasters or building frame, the owner is required to provide appropriately scaled elevation drawings indicating existing and proposed elevation detail and articulation of the subject structure. (Bear in mind that historic structures should retain their load-bearing or visual strength in order to retain their historical significance.) Building materials, scale, colors and details of the architecture should be indicated. The owner must demonstrate that every effort has been made to restore the building conditions to their original historic state.

Rear Entrances

Because public parking in the historic district will be located behind the buildings, rear entrances provide an important point of public access to businesses. The rear façade of a building should be clean and well maintained and may include small signs, awnings or window displays to provide a welcoming appearance.

Utility Areas

Exterior trash and storage areas, service yards, loading areas, and mechanical systems must be shielded from view of nearby streets and adjacent structures in a manner that is compatible with the building and site design. All roof equipment should be screened from public view.

Signage

Signage is regulated by the Zoning Ordinance. All signage in the city, including within the National Commercial Historic District, is regulated by the Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 74 of the City Code. The following sections provide guidelines for sign design where permitted. Some signs suggested may not yet be permitted in the Zoning Ordinance. However, this section gives recommendation and direction to the City Council for changes that may be made to the Zoning Ordinance as it relates to the National Commercial Historic District.

History

During the peak of commercial activity in Albert Lea, signs in the historic district contributed to the distinct environment of the overall streetscape. The Heritage Preservation Commission will encourage any new building signage to reflect the distinct historic nature of the subject building.

Design

- The total area of all sign faces on or projecting from a building is limited to 20 percent of the square footage of the first floor level of the building face.
- Signage on awnings or hung under awnings, projecting signs, signs applied to the building, and window signs, whether internal or external, are included in the 20 percent.



Types of Signage

History

In the past, streetscapes included a variety of signs, which often identified the names of buildings and dates of construction in addition to business names. Signs were simple, bold and well crafted. Lettering was clear, maximizing contrast between the background and the letters.

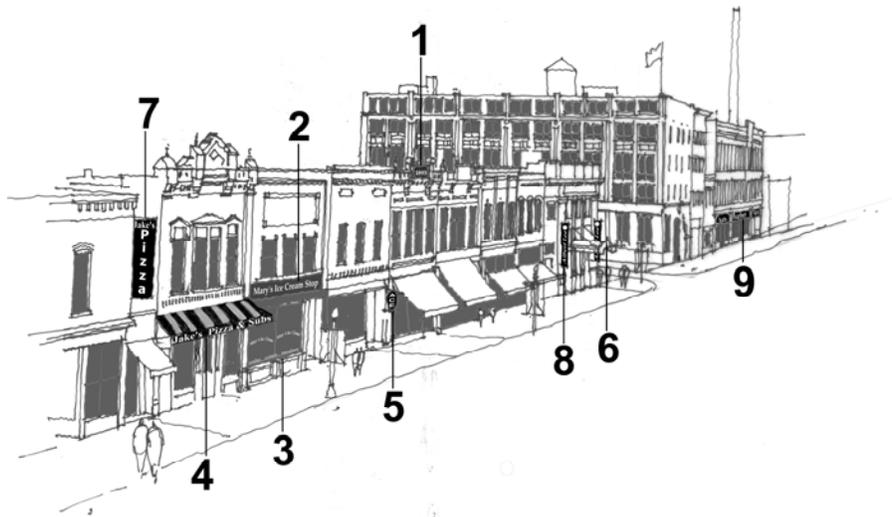
Types of signage in the historic streetscape:

(See illustration at bottom of page.)

- 1 Historic building identification signs
- 2 Storefront signs
- 3 Window signs
- 4 Awnings
- 5 Projecting signs
- 6 Marquee signs
- 7 Existing historic wall signs
- 8 Banners
- 9 Coordination Signs

Design

- Maintenance and restoration of existing historic signs is encouraged in lieu of replacement.
- Signage may not obscure any original historic architectural features of the building.
- A projecting sign with two faces is considered one sign for the purpose of locating the business name.
- Signage for businesses not located within the building is prohibited



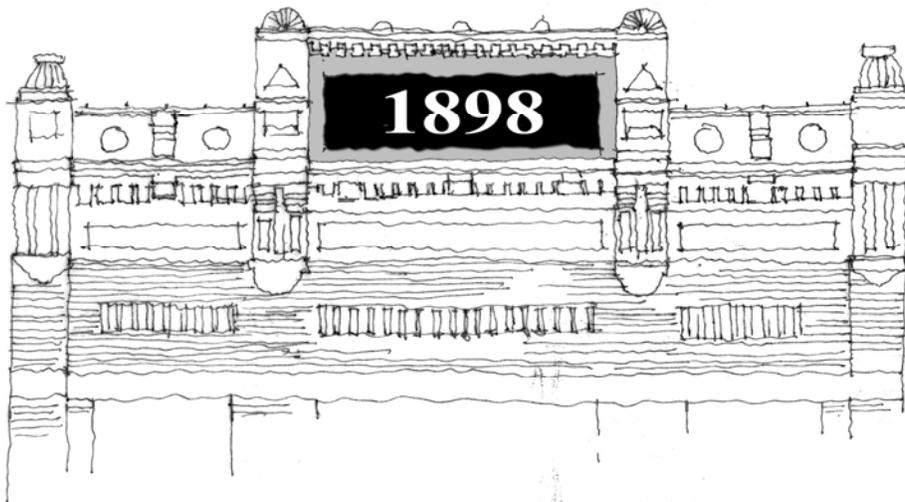
Historic Building Identification Signs

History

Architectural signs are integrated into the building fabric and are constructed of permanent materials such as stone or metal. Historic buildings often included signs on the façade identifying building names and dates of construction. These signs were typically located in the roof parapet detailing or in a cornerstone detail. Preserving or replicating these signs enhances the historic character of the district.

Design

- Existing architectural signs must be preserved.
- The use of original building names in new signage is encouraged.



Storefront Signs

History

Storefront signs are located on the horizontal band dividing the storefront windows from the façade of the building.

Design

- The storefront sign may only be used to display the primary name of the business. Use only one line of lettering, leaving out secondary information.
- Bold lettering with sufficient contrast between the lettering and the background should be used.
- Graphics in the sign are included in the maximum allowable area.
- “Trademark” or “logo” signs will not be allowed if the color and character are not in keeping with historical guidelines.
- Signs may not be placed on roofs or roof elements such as mansards (sides of the roof).



Window Signs

History

Window signs are applied inside the glass of storefront windows, upper floor windows and doorways. These signs are focused on the approaching pedestrian and provide more detailed information about the business.

Design

- Total sign area within a window may not exceed 10 percent of the window area.
- Lettering should be kept small, bearing in mind that the reader will be in close proximity to the sign. Use several lines where necessary and consider curving the top line.
- If a clear display space is desired, signs may be inserted at the base and/or head of the window.
- Lettering formed with neon may be used in the inside of the window, provided the size, light intensity, color and style are consistent with the theme of the building and the character of the district.
- Street numbers should be displayed on or directly above the door, and business hours should be displayed on the inside of the door or in an adjacent window.
- Exterior and interior window signs that move, flash or display electronic reader boards (LED) are prohibited.



sign ratio formula:

height (12'-0" fixed height) x width x 20% = square footage for signage

example:

12'-0" x 20'-0" x .20 = 48 s.f. of signage

Awnings

History

Fabric awnings were common along the streetscape in the historic district. Their functions included shading the building and merchandise, bringing a human scale to a tall building, shielding pedestrians from the elements, creating a space to socialize and providing signage space. Fabric awnings were retractable, to let in daylight when needed.

Design

- Awnings are required to be retractable. Fixed awnings are not allowed.
- Awnings should function primarily as shelter rather than signage space and should extend well out over the sidewalk.
- The scale of awnings should fit the geometry of the building façade, windows and door openings.
- The awning valance, or skirt, should be proportioned to the size of the awning but may not exceed 12 inches in height.
- Signs on awnings are permitted (in place of other sign types) on the end panel valance or front valance only.
- Plain or striped fabrics in subtle and subdued colors should be used. Large areas of bright colors are inappropriate.
- Awnings are required to be made from water repellent or vinyl-coated (but not glossy) canvas.
- Canvas should be loose and flowing, not stretched tight.
- Fixed, round-headed awnings will be considered only over arched windows or doors, and only if placed below or within the arched lintel.
- Back lighting of awnings is prohibited.



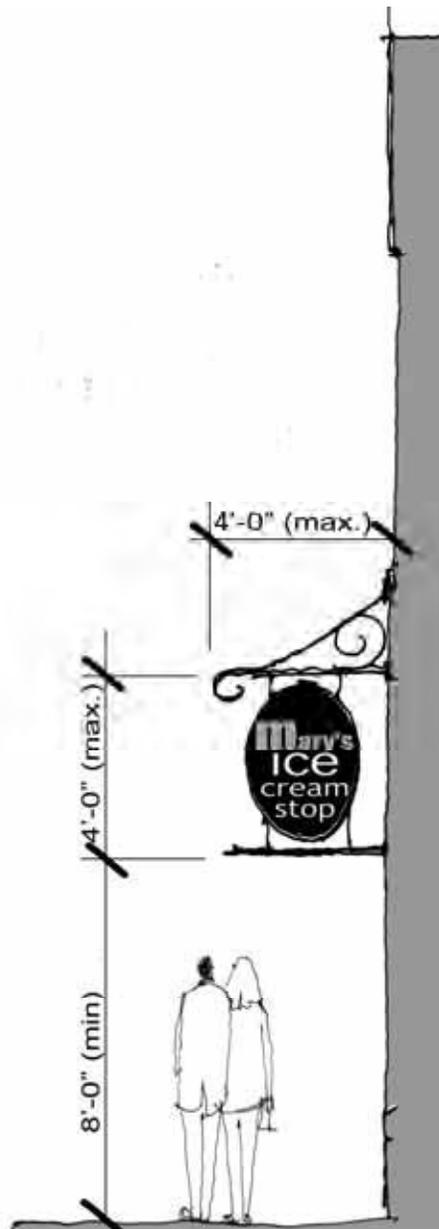
Projecting Signs

History

Projecting signs were positioned at a right angle to the building façade, either fixed to the wall or hanging from a bracket. Their purpose was to attract the attention of pedestrians and motorists from a distance. The signs were kept small and simple, however, in order to prevent one sign from obscuring another.

Design

- A minimum distance of 8 feet between the sidewalk and the bottom of the sign is required.
- Signs should be no more than 4 feet long and may not extend more than 4 feet from the building face.
- Historically accurate materials, such as wood or metal signboards with metal brackets, should be selected.



Marquee Signs

History

Marquees were used historically to identify places of celebration, places that frequently held special events, or places where people commonly came together. The signs were hung with large steel brackets and projected over the sidewalk, encouraging people to gather in front of a building. Marquees could be found on buildings such as theaters, opera houses, hotels, banks or clubs. These signs were large in scale and visible to pedestrians from a long distance.

Design

- Marquees may be constructed only with special approval from the City of Albert Lea and must be structurally sound.
- Use is limited to the types of places or businesses where marquees have traditionally been used.
- Lights may be incorporated in order to communicate a special event or a place for social gathering.
- Existing architectural construction elements should be used where possible.
- Marquees may extend over the sidewalk.



Existing Historic Wall Signs

History

During the period of the 1920s–1930s, painted wall signs occasionally appeared on the sides of buildings at corner locations, or where a low adjacent roofline exposed an expanse of plain brick wall above. As these signs were high up on the building, the messages were simple and the lettering tended to be large and bold.

Design

- Where existing painted wall signs can still be found, they should either be left exposed or restored to their original colors.
- New wall signs on historic buildings are prohibited.
- Signs should be limited to primary streets, public parking lots and alleys.



Banners

History

Banners were used historically as a method for advertising an event, such as a sale, or drawing attention to a place, such as a theater.

Design

- Banners should accent the historical flavor of the building to which they are attached.
- Signage should appear on both sides of the banner, unless it is hung from the wall of a building.
- Banners should be made of flexible fabric.
- Use of banners will be approved on a case-by-case basis.



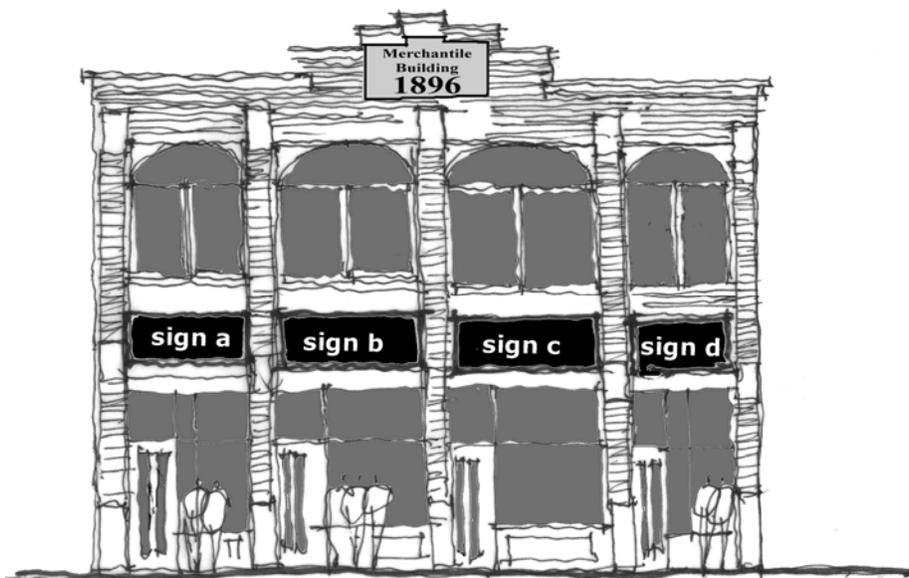
Coordinated Signage

History

At the time of the commercial boom in Albert Lea (ca. 1900–1920), most buildings were owned and occupied by a single business. Merchants thought of their entire façade as potential sign space and were able to ensure that all signs were well coordinated. Since many buildings now contain multiple businesses, it is important that tenants and owners cooperate to design a sign package, which will help to reunify the building façade.

Design

- Multiple-tenant buildings should submit a sign package proposal that includes building elevations (drawn to scale) and sign types, locations and sizes. Each building should be viewed as a whole, and a unified design strategy should be placed to take advantage of all possible sign locations.
- The sign package should be designed to emphasize the whole width and geometry of storefronts and individual buildings. Avoid the use of unified signage across multiple buildings that are obviously separate and of a different and distinct scale or architecture.
- Tenants and owners should use a common lettering style and color scheme on the building.
- An identifiable name – e.g., “Mercantile Building” – may be given to an entire building. Individual business signs would then be placed near their respective entrances and/or on a common directory.



Materials

History

Apart from architectural signs, the original exterior signs of Albert Lea were constructed of painted wood and metal. Window signs were painted, etched or gilded. Today a great range of materials is available, including metals and plastics, and their unconditioned use can lead to a confusion of signage that detracts from the unique character of Albert Lea. Modern sign materials are acceptable provided their design is consistent with the historic character of the district.

Design

- Painted wood should be used where practicable. Modern materials that simulate wood may also be acceptable and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- Supporting brackets for projecting signs should be metal, painted black.
- Neon may be used for interior window signs only.
- Backlit and internally lit signs are prohibited.

Shape of Signs

History

The signs of historic Albert Lea were forthright and utilitarian. Simple, framed rectangular boards were constructed to fill the available spaces. A common type was the long narrow sign, which stretched across the top of storefront windows.

Design

- Sign shapes should be designed to fit and fill the available space. Consider using long narrow signs spanning the full width of the façade.
- Window signs should be symmetrical in layout and position. Top lines may be curved.
- If a projecting sign is used, it should be kept simple, small and utilitarian.

Color

History

The commercial structures of this time period did not use a wide range of paint colors; dark green, dark brown and black were common. Signs were painted for contrast rather than for color (e.g., black letters on a white background or gold letters on a black background). A wider variety of paint colors is more frequently used today. If colors are used indiscriminately, however, the unique historic character of Albert Lea will be tarnished.

Design

- Subdued colors and dark tones should be chosen, in keeping with the period. Properly selected combinations of dark brown, green, black, off-white and gold are all appropriate.
- Only those combinations of tones with sufficient contrast to be clearly legible – dark on light or light on dark – should be chosen.
- Support brackets of projecting signs should be colored black.

Lettering

History

Most of the original signs in Albert Lea were strictly practical – the lettering had to be large enough to have an impact at the required viewing distance and clear enough to be readily legible. The style was generally a plain bold or classic uppercase font arranged symmetrically, and the same style was often repeated on one building.

Design

A bold and simple type style should be used consistently on all appropriate signs.

Lighting

History

In the nineteenth century, Albert Lea would have been dimly lit. Today we expect our cities to be bright and lively at night. Our goal within the historic district is to achieve an acceptable standard of lighting without compromising the essential character of the historic setting.

Design

- Indirect lighting should be used, and spotlights should be placed discreetly, in such a way as to shield the source from pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
- Neon lights are permitted in window signs only and should be designed with respect for the historic ambiance of the area.
- Flashing, moving or intermittent lights are prohibited.
- Changeable or movable letters or graphics are prohibited.

Installation

History

With the inevitably high turnover rate of businesses in many of the historic buildings, signage has become temporary in nature. Efforts should be made to ensure that damage to buildings is minimized during installation and removal of signage.

Design

- The maximum area of signage permitted by city ordinances is 20 percent of the square footage of the building face, including windows.
- All signage must comply with city zoning ordinances.
- The installation of any signage or graphics should have a minimal impact on the building and must allow the building to return to its original condition upon signage removal.
- Reuse of existing mounting brackets, studs or holes is recommended where possible.
- Signs should be installed by contractors familiar with signage guidelines and licensed by the City of Albert Lea.

Exterior Fixtures, Furnishings and Equipment

Sidewalk Furnishings

Sidewalk furnishings may include bicycle racks, seasonal planters, restaurant tables, tree guards, benches and kiosks.

Where temporary sidewalk furnishings are permitted, they are required to reflect the historic character of the district. Furnishings of suitable historic design and durable finishes and materials are appropriate. Permit applications should include photographic illustrations of any proposed temporary exterior furnishing and a scaled location diagram, as well as finish and material samples.

Lighting

Temporary or permanent additive lighting features of an historic building should conform to performance specifications and reflect the character of the district. Photographic illustrations, performance specifications, foot candle and lighting distribution diagrams, and elevation and detail drawings of the installation of proposed exterior light fixtures should be included with the application.

Window Coverings

Window openings original to any structure within the historic district may not be abandoned, boarded over or in-filled on the exterior or interior of the building with any building material whatsoever. It is required instead that building openings be restored to their original design and configuration. Owners are encouraged to dress windows located in under-utilized or unoccupied spaces with window coverings appropriate to the historic character of the subject property. Before taking such actions, owners are required to submit an application that includes illustrations of any proposed window treatments or coverings, in addition to finish and material samples. The owner must demonstrate that every effort has been made to restore the subject building conditions to their original state.

Mechanical, Electrical and Service Areas

Mechanical, electrical and service area equipment, whether at grade level or on rooftops, should be screened with visual barriers. Barriers should be constructed of durable materials compatible with the historic architectural detailing of the original building. Permit applications for mechanical, electrical or service area equipment requiring screening should include the following information:

- Equipment type, size and location
- Setback requirements of the enclosure
- Graphic illustrations of architectural screening showing mounting details and color, as well as finish and material samples



Submittal Process

The following information will be required for the Heritage Preservation Commission to fully understand the project and its impact on the downtown historic district.

The required format for information is 24"x36", with a set of reductions at 8½"x11" or 11"x17". Proposals may be submitted in person, through the mail, on CD or by e-mail. If submitting by CD or e-mail, bear in mind that material samples must also be submitted.

Information Needed for Project Review

- Site Plan at 1"=20' scale, with graphic scale showing dimensions, adjacent properties and structures. Landscaping, lighting, grading and drainage plan to the same scale.
- Architectural elevations of all sides of the project and preliminary floor plans at 1/8" scale. Elevations should include the adjacent building on each side of the proposed project.
- Contextual sketches, if necessary to convey the idea.
- Material samples, showing actual materials to be used, their color and details showing how they will be used.
- Descriptions of the methods of cleaning, maintaining, restoring or improving existing building materials.
- 8½"x11" color photographs of the site.
- Photographs showing the original historic appearance of the subject building. Historic photographs may be found at the State Historic Preservation Office, the Freeborn County Historical Society and the Albert Lea Public Library.

Review Process

The Community Development Division of the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) aims to support the development of successful project proposals, with the goal of preserving and rehabilitating properties in the historic district. The first step in the review process is an informal review with the staff of the Community Development Division. Other city staff or members of the HPC may also take part. At this meeting the elements of your plan and the requirements for drawings and documentation will be discussed. There may be more than one informal discussion if necessary.

The preliminary meeting will give you guidance for the formal review. In preparing for the formal review, you should consider the resources required to make your presentation. These may include historic photographs, material and color samples, as-built drawings and presentation drawings representing your proposal. Provide the HPC with a clear and concise description of your proposal. Presentations should last no longer than 30 minutes and will be followed by a

15 minute period for questions and discussion.

The formal review will take place at a regular or special meeting of the HPC. All documentation for the formal review must be submitted to the Community Development Director a minimum of 15 days prior to the HPC formal review meeting. The date of submission is considered the application date. This allows for the preparation of a formal report by HPC staff and provides an opportunity for the HPC to review the presentation materials and staff report prior to the formal review meeting. You will receive notification regarding the time and location of the formal review meeting (see city ordinance).

Building Permit

A building permit may be obtained from the City of Albert Lea Division of Inspection after the HPC has approved the proposal. Additional information may be required for the building permit. If so, the applicant will be informed during the informal review meeting.

Contact Information

To begin the review process or discuss the requirements, please contact the Community Development Director at (507) 377-4315 or send an inquiry to the following address:

City of Albert Lea
221 E. Clark Street
Albert Lea, MN 56007

Heritage Preservation Property Alteration Permit Application for Certification of Appropriateness

Completion of this application is required if a property is located in a local historic district or is designated as a local landmark.

Depending upon the magnitude of proposed work, your request will require approval from the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC).

1. PROJECT ADDRESS

Property Location _____

2. APPLICANT INFORMATION

Applicant is Property Owner Contractor Architect Other _____

Applicant Name _____

Address _____ City, State, Zip _____

Telephone Number _____ Fax Number _____

E-mail Address _____

3. PROPERTY OWNER INFORMATION (if different from applicant)

Property Owner Name _____

Address _____ City, State, Zip _____

Telephone Number _____ Fax Number _____

E-mail Address _____

4. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Type of property Single business Multiple businesses

Type of changes proposed New construction Renovation

General Renovations/Changes Proposed

Please describe, briefly, the types of renovation or changes being proposed. (Additional details may be provided in attachments to this application form or in the required documentation).

Renovations/Changes in Signage

- Work proposed New signage
 Restoration of existing signage
 Replication of historic signage

Number of signs proposed _____

- Type(s) of signage proposed Historic building identification signs
 Storefront signs
 Window signs
 Awnings
 Projecting signs
 Marquee signs
 Restoration of historic wall signs
 Banners

5. SIGNATURES

I HEREBY CERTIFY that I have read, examined, and understand this application and that the information submitted herein and attached hereto is true and accurate and correctly states my intentions. I also understand this application will not be accepted and reviewed until all required supporting documentation has been supplied.

Applicant Signature _____
Date

Property Owner Signature _____
Date

Submit this application and required supplementary information to:

City of Albert Lea
221 E. Clark Street
Albert Lea, MN 56007

Contact the Albert Lea Community Development Office at (507) 377-4315 if you have questions regarding this application.

6. FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date received _____

- Approved
- Approved with conditions
- More information required
- Denied

Comments

Application Checklist

This checklist is designed to help you put together your application package. Some of the items listed may not be required if they are not relevant to the construction or renovation you are proposing.

Site plan drawings indicating:

- Pedestrian areas, service areas and location of adjacent properties
- Primary and secondary street frontage
- Parking areas, parking access, landscape features, light pole locations and open spaces

Scaled elevation drawings showing:

- Building height and height of adjacent buildings
- Building setback
- Façade rhythm or proportion
- Existing and proposed building openings, including pedestrian entry, storefront openings and all window openings
- Existing and proposed linear, horizontal or vertical trim
- Existing and proposed roof and upper story details
- Existing and proposed storefront and transom articulation
- Existing and proposed cornice detail and articulation
- Existing and proposed wall articulation
- Existing and proposed window details
- Location, size and types of signage

Sample materials:

- Building materials, with indication of how they will be used
- Color samples

Other information:

- Contextual sketches, if necessary
- Coordinated lighting plan
- Description of methods for cleaning, maintaining, restoring or improving existing building materials
- Color photographs of the building site (8½"x11")
- Photographs showing the original appearance of historic buildings

Glossary of Architectural Terms

Arcade	A series of openings supported by columns or piers that may be freestanding or attached to a wall, or an exterior covered passageway along a building façade that is open to the street front.
Architectural sign	A unified system of signs for a single building aiding visitors in finding their destinations.
Awning	A projecting or suspended covering over a door or window. Types of awnings include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fixed – An awning that cannot be retracted or rolled up.• Operable – An awning that can be retracted or rolled up.
Banner	A long strip of fabric or other flexible material displaying an advertisement, name of business or name of an event.
Composition materials	The materials of which a building or a building element is constructed.
Corbelled brickwork	An architectural feature projecting from a wall that supports or appears to support a ceiling, beam or shelf.
Cornerstone	A stone at the corner of a building uniting two intersecting walls, or a building identification.
Cornice	A projecting shelf along the top of a wall, often supported by brackets.
Design elements	The use of colors, space, texture and other components to create a unified appearance of a building.
Exterior	Any element of a building that can be viewed from the outside.
Fabric	Bendable or moveable cloth.
Façade opening	Any opening in the face of a building, such as a window or door.



Façade	Front or principle face of a building; any side of a building facing a street or another open space.
Historic wall sign	A large painted image applied directly to the wall of an historic building.
Infill	New construction on a vacant lot within the historic district.
Infill panel	A façade opening that is filled in with solid material.
Layers	Materials such as skins or siding that have been added on top of the original building façade.
Load-bearing	A structure capable of bearing weight.
Marquee	A permanent roof-like shelter over an entrance to a building.
Massing	The composition of a unified and coherent external shape of a building.
Parapet	A low wall projecting from the edge of a platform, terrace or roof. Parapets may rise above the cornice of the building.
Pier	A vertical supporting structure, such as a pillar or a section of wall.
Plasters	Mixtures of lime or gypsum, sand, and water that harden and are used to coat walls or ceilings.
Reader boards	A visual display board that conveys information such as advertisements or business names, often using LED technology.
Rhythm	The maintaining of consistency in general appearance and architectural elements across a series of adjacent buildings.
Roofline (and mansard)	The top edge covering a building. A mansard roofline contains a double slope on all four sides, the lower slope being longer and steeper than the upper.
Sheltered transition	A sheltered area allowing pedestrians to move between buildings without being exposed to rain or

other elements. Examples include arcades, awnings and canopies.

Sign bands	A continuous, narrow sign that runs around the exterior of a building.
Sill	A horizontal band along the bottom of the interior or exterior of a window
Site improvements	Alterations to a site that enhance the utility of any structure built on the site.
Streetscape	The appearance or view of a street.
Transom	A horizontal element in a window or above a door.
Valance	A short piece of fabric hung from the edge of an awning.
Window lintel	A horizontal beam located over a window supporting the weight above it.

