

Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

Design Guidelines

A Guide to Building
Rehabilitation,
Renovation
And
New Construction

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These Design Guidelines are the result of collaborative work between the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership's Design Review Board and the City of Fond du Lac Community Development Department. They will be used in evaluating DFP Facade Grant applications, and for proposals for changes to Downtown properties.

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The Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership

The Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership is a non-profit, largely volunteer-driven **organization founded in 2000 that is committed “To establish a diverse, prosperous and healthy district that is the social, commercial and cultural heart of our community.”**

The work of the Partnership is completed by volunteer committees who work together to fulfill the goals of the organization. Volunteers are always needed to sit on committees, organize special events and help with special projects. To learn more about the DFP, call (920) 921-9500 or log on to www.downtownfonddulac.com.

Wisconsin Main Street Program

Fond du Lac was welcomed into the Wisconsin Main Street Program in 2004. The goal of the program is to stimulate economic development through the preservation of historic commercial districts. This goal is achieved through its trademark Four Point Plan, with distinct and identifiable objectives:

Organization: Establishing consensus and cooperation by building partnerships that will allow development of a consistent revitalization program and that will permit the emergence of effective management and advocacy of the historic commercial district.

Promotion: Creating a positive image of the historic commercial district to attract customers and investors and to rekindle community pride.

Design: Preserving historic resources and enhancing the visual quality of the historic commercial district by being attentive to all elements of the physical environment.

Economic Restructuring: Strengthening the existing economic assets of the historic commercial district while diversifying its economic base and developing methods to finance needed improvements.

More information on Wisconsin Main Street is available at <http://www.wedc.org/mainstreet>

Main Street Historic Districts

The South Main Street Historic District was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on March 11, 1993, and the North Main Street District on March 6, 2002. Both of these districts are eligible for federal and state rehabilitation tax credits that often make substantial rehabilitation projects more affordable. Property owners interested in using these tax credits should consult with the Wisconsin Historical Society for the latest program requirements and standards. See map on Page 4.

Vision statement for the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership:

Downtown Fond du Lac will be a local and regional destination that will serve as the cultural and economic hub of the city and surrounding areas. Our financially successful downtown will present a clean, safe and friendly environment that has broad appeal.

Downtown Fond du Lac will have an atmosphere that is welcoming, comfortable and enjoyable through its attention to historic preservation, restoration and development.

*Downtown will include a healthy and unique mix of businesses, including retail, professional services, dining and entertainment. The **downtown’s streetscape will be modern and well cared for, while at the same time paying homage to its heritage.***

The public will have great awareness of all that downtown Fond du Lac has to offer, and the community will support efforts to maintain a high quality of life for residents, businesses and other stakeholders.

Design guidelines apply to properties in the Downtown Business Improvement District and the Downtown Design Overlay District.

How to Use These Design Guidelines

What makes a Main Street business successful? There is no single formula. Product, price, display, service, location and market all play a part. So does the outward appearance of the business.

Many business owners regard appearance as secondary to the more immediate concerns of price, product and service. Too often, the building itself is neglected or mishandled. Yet experience shows that appearance is important to a healthy commercial district. With business and property owners working together to create an attractive image, the downtown as a whole can benefit.

The guiding principles of downtown Fond du Lac design are:

- A mixed-use urban configuration supports retail and commercial businesses by clustering them in a tight-knit, pedestrian-friendly environment with compatible amenities such as restaurants, entertainment, housing and related services.
- Buildings designed to be compatible with historic downtown buildings reinforce the cultural heritage of Fond du Lac.
- Street-facing buildings with active ground-floor uses help support a pedestrian-oriented environment.
- Quality building materials and their consistent application create an environment of quality that supports property values.
- Comfortable and visible vehicular as well as transit and pedestrian facilities encourage visitors to and from downtown.
- Defined and continuous streetscapes with consistent plantings, signage and pedestrian amenities create identity and provide an attractive; predictable environment for business.
- Civic and community buildings and public spaces are integral to the civic identity of the community and should receive special consideration and pride of place.

The Design Guidelines for Downtown Fond du Lac were developed through a collaborative effort of the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership, the City of Fond du Lac Community Development Department, downtown property owners and friends of the downtown dedicated to preserving and enhancing the rich history and architecture that is concentrated in the Central Business District.

The Guidelines augment design requirements of the City of Fond du Lac Zoning Code for development in Downtown Fond du Lac for changes to existing buildings as well as new development or redevelopment of properties. The Guidelines are intended to assist business owners and property owners to make decisions that will enhance individual property and the overall downtown.

Applicants for the Downtown Partnership’s Façade Grant Program and the Downtown Façade Design Grant and Retail Incentive Fund—for projects that include changes to the exterior of downtown buildings—will need to use and comply with these guidelines in the approval process. Applications for DFP grants are reviewed on a regular basis by special committees established for that purpose. These guidelines are applicable for projects in the downtown, including historically significant buildings. In general, the design guidelines conform to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation & Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings (Revised 1990).



INTRODUCTION

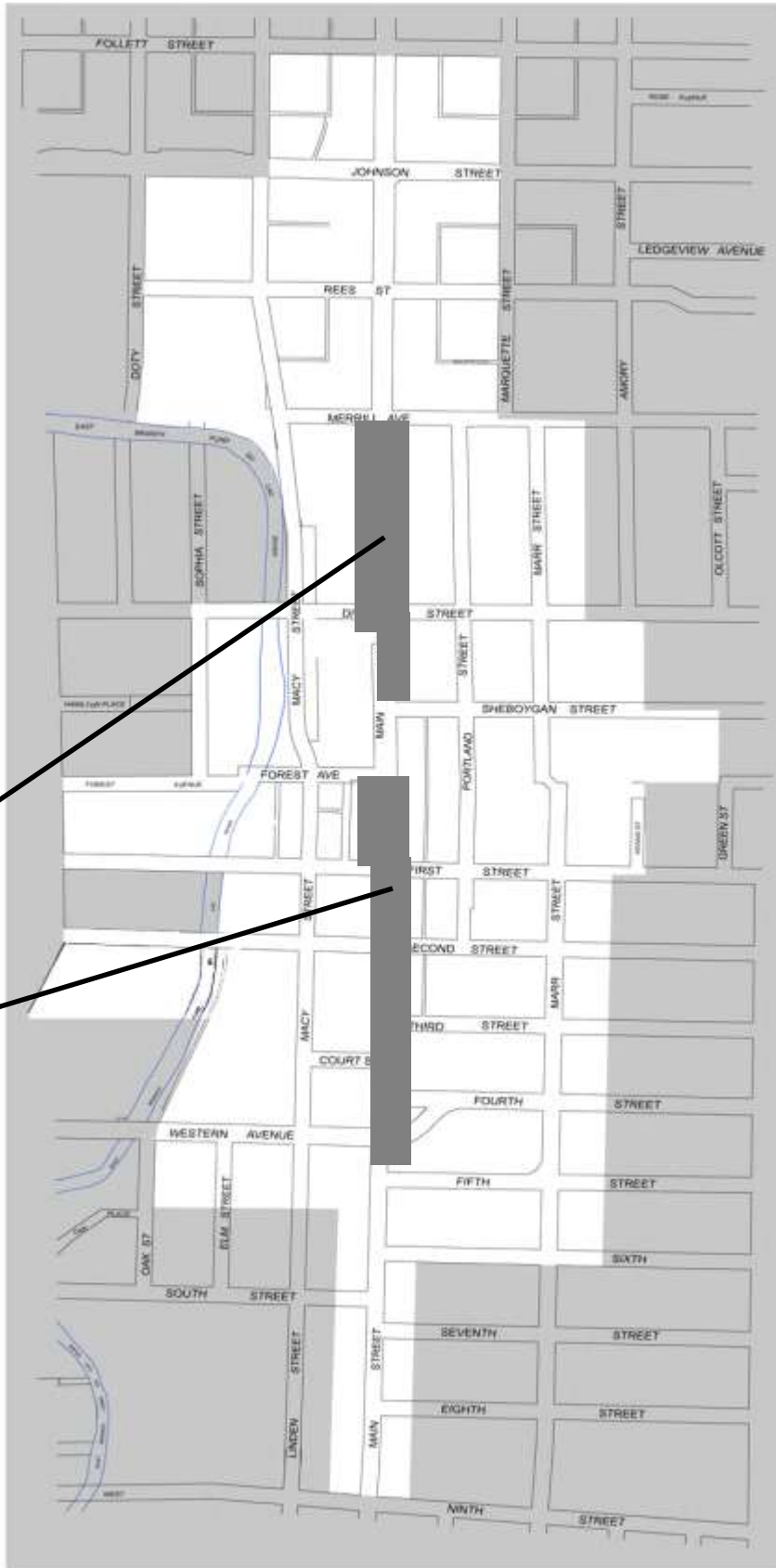
Map of the Downtown Business Improvement District

The downtown Business Improvement District boundaries were first drawn in 1999 and adjusted in 2003 and 2009. The work of the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership affects businesses within the BID boundaries. The BID boundary is indicated by the non-shaded area.

North Main Street Historic District

South Main Street Historic District

Two historic districts occur within the BID—South Main and North Main. These districts were designated in 1993 and 2002, respectively, by the State of Wisconsin.



Fond du Lac was granted a city charter in 1852 by the State of Wisconsin. At that **time, the city was a center for northeastern Wisconsin's booming lumber industry and** growing as a railroading center. The population was around 5,000, growing to 10,000 by the 1860s. By the 1870s, the lumber boom was waning and Fond du Lac established itself as a resort destination, making use of local artesian wells, which were touted as medicinal and curative. After the turn of the century, the local economy began to revive, as new and expanded companies brought a boom period to the city. The industries that brought prosperity to Fond du Lac included the Fred Rueping Leather Co., Moore and Galloway Lumber Co., the Huber and Fuhrman Drug Mills, Giddings and Lewis Co., the Bechaud Brewing Co., the Winnebago Furniture Manufacturing Co., the Fond du Lac Shirt and Overall Co., and the Vulcan Manufacturing Co.



West Main Street looking North from Forest Avenue, 1956.

Many downtown buildings were erected during this time of prosperity. There are many examples of Italianate, Classical Revival and Art Deco architectural styles in the two downtown historic districts, North Main and South Main. This building boom helped give downtown its cohesive appearance. Most of the buildings share party walls, are constructed of brick, and are two or three stories tall. Many of the buildings have terra cotta decoration, which helps unify the buildings.



East Main Street North of First Street, 1956.

The cohesive central business district was a window-shopper's delight. One after another, the store windows formed a continuous display case of merchandise. Thus, the appearance of Main Street today is largely a result of a strong architectural tradition. Beginning with the early buildings of the 1800s and continuing through the 1930s, this tradition controlled the appearance of downtown. The consistency of this building tradition brought about a unity that strengthened downtown as a whole. If business districts today are to benefit from this unity, changes to buildings must respect this tradition.

Commercial activities grew along Main Street in both the 19th and early 20th centuries, reaching a peak after World War II. After World War II, an important area of growth that has provided employment for many workers has been in government services, centered in the large City-County Government Center on Macy Street, which was built in 1980. In the **late 1970's and into the 1980's, shopping mall and retail strip development** grew in the western area of the city, pulling some retailers from downtown. Because the retail center of the city shifted, the downtown commercial district experienced a state of transition where professional offices claimed much of the space vacated by retailers. Ongoing improvements to the downtown have created an attractive area of specialty retail shops, banks and professional offices. The result is **that Fond du Lac's Main Street still remains a vital and thriving center of activity.**



Fond du Lac Dry Goods Co. 2nd & Main Street, 1956.

Sources: Fond du Lac Department of Community Development; "City of Fond du Lac Intensive Survey Report, Architectural and Historical Resources Survey," 1992.



42 N. Main Street

The drawing at left shows the basic building block of downtown Fond du Lac, the traditional storefront commercial facade. Although built in many sizes, shapes and styles, it was always essentially the same facade.

Facades of this type line Main Street on both sides. One next to another, they formed strong, solid blocks, marked by the rhythm of repeating parts. Facades were related to each other through compatibility in height, width, setback, proportions of openings, composition and rhythm.

A Note of Emphasis

Historically, downtown facades complemented and reinforced one another. When it was first constructed, the typical Main Street facade exhibited some basic inherent qualities: an architectural style characterized by its decoration, certain construction materials and a unified visual composition in which the parts looked related. These qualities came together to form a visual resource. *Sensitive change* accepts these facade qualities and builds on them. The result is a harmonious blend of changes and existing elements. *Insensitive change*, on the other hand, ignores and often negates the qualities of the original resource. The result is an unnecessary clash between new and old.

Compare the drawings at the lower left of the original and remodeled building facades. Notice how alterations of the original facades destroyed the continuity. The facades are no longer visually tied together because their rhythms and proportions have been altered. Each facade is now unrelated to the next, and the character of the building group suffers.



Original facades

Architectural Review Standards

Context refers to how a structure fits with the surrounding area. New design elements should be compatible with nearby development. A building addition should match or complement the existing structure.

Scale is the relative size and mass of structures compared to one another. A small building should not be constructed adjacent to large buildings unless provisions are made to minimize the difference in scale. The visual continuity of roofs and contributing elements (parapet walls, cornices, etc.) should be maintained in building development or redevelopment.

Balance and Proportion is the relationship of one part of a building to another with the inclination that each part is in harmony with other parts. Building facades, including details, should contain a proportion of height and width. The vertical pattern of exterior building elements should be compatible in design and elevation of existing buildings in the immediate area which conform to the general design theme of Downtown Fond du Lac. The horizontal pattern of exterior building elements formed by patterns of windows and doors should be spaced at regular intervals across all visible facades of the building, and should be compatible with existing buildings in the immediate area which conform to the general theme of the downtown.



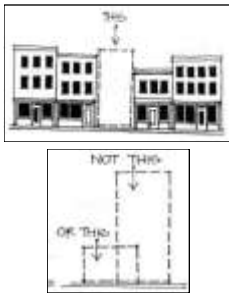
Remodeled facades

Unity and Theme pertains to a consistent style and purpose especially applicable to a multiple building development. Good unity can be accomplished with the use of the same materials throughout a development. An accessory structure should be compatible with the principle structure in terms of character, roof shape, building material, color and architectural details.

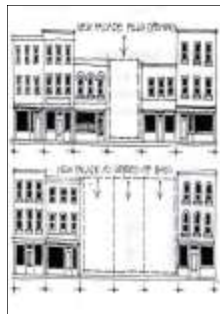
The architectural styles that exist in the downtown should be judged on their own qualities, not simply by their age. Before you set out to make changes because your building is not “historic enough,” see it for what it is and learn to recognize its own particular values.

The construction of new buildings on vacant lots downtown should be encouraged. Because this type of building fills a “hole” in the built environment, it is called *infill construction*. The central idea behind good infill construction is a simple one. To a large degree, the design of an infill façade should be an outgrowth of those around it. If the design of the new façade is based on those of its neighbors, it should be compatible. This approach strikes a proper balance between the existing architecture and good contemporary design. The modern designer is allowed the freedom of individual talent-within limits.

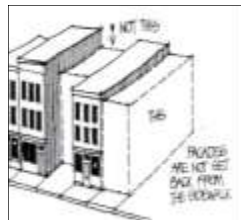
Height, width, relationship to the street, roof forms, proportion, composition, rhythm, proportion of openings, materials and colors – these criteria should be considered in façade design. By relating buildings to each other, new construction and building renovations can be welcome additions.



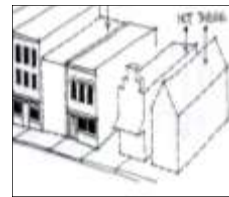
Height
Buildings in traditional commercial districts share a similar height. A new facade that is too high or too low can interrupt this consistent quality.



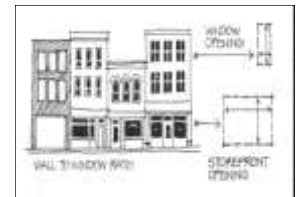
Width
There is a characteristic rhythm of facade width along the street.



Relationship to street
A building's relationship to the street is often also called the “setback.”



Roof forms
The form of the roof and building cornice downtown usually means a flat roof hidden behind a cornice.



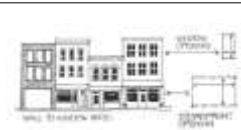
Proportion
The characteristic proportion is the relationship between height and width.



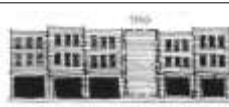
Composition
The composition – the organization of its parts – of infill facades should be similar to that of surrounding facades.



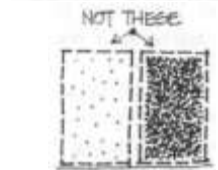
Rhythm
Rhythms carry throughout the block include window spacing.



Proportion of openings
The size and proportion of window and door openings plus the ratio of window area to solid wall creates the proportion of openings.



Materials
An infill facade should be composed of materials that complement adjacent facades. The new building should not stand out from others.



Color
The colors chosen for a facade should tie in to its neighbors.



Window Display



Recessed Entry



Recessed Entry

A general rule for renovations is that the storefront should be designed to fit within the opening originally intended for it and not extend beyond.

The traditional storefront design theme, characterized by strong horizontal and vertical rhythms formed by building openings, columns, cornices, kick plates, sign bands, large display windows and transom windows should be employed for all new nonresidential buildings. When façade changes are made, hidden architectural elements and original materials should be restored or replaced, when practical, to match the architecture of the building.

Ornamentation that is inconsistent with the general design theme of downtown area must be avoided. Building facades should not be cluttered with brackets, wiring, meter boxes, antennae, gutters, downspouts and other similar appurtenances. Where essential to the building, appurtenances should be colored to blend with the building exterior.

If you wish to restore the original storefront, examine the façade - you may find evidence of its original appearance. Research can be invaluable - visit the local library or historical society for historic photos or postcards of your building; your building may have been depicted in an old newspaper advertisement. Ask previous owners if they have original building plans. Look for old maps or lithographs; they often include drawings of downtown buildings.

Windows

The traditional storefront was composed almost entirely of windows. For very functional reasons, the storefront was designed to be as transparent as possible; this allowed a maximum of natural light into the typically narrow, otherwise windowless store space and relieved the closed-in feeling; it also gave the potential customer a good view into the store.

Many original storefronts also contain transoms above the display windows. When used in conjunction with white painted ceilings, transom windows permitted sunlight to penetrate deep inside the shop, helping to illuminate merchandise displays and giving a pleasing quality of light. In many buildings these windows have been **covered, darkening the store's interior and changing the proportion of a composition** of the storefront. Often, removing the covering material will reveal intact transom windows.

The intent of a transparent storefront is as valid today as it was in the past. For this reason, it is recommended that the design of storefronts, whether in new or existing building, consider the largest possible window area.

- Windows and doors should be similar in size, proportion and alignment based on the architectural style of the building.
- First floor windows are required and must establish visibility and transparency along the street.
- Clear or slightly tinted glass should be used. Mirror glass, smoked glass or heavily tinted glass is not permitted.
- If all other efforts to maintain or repair a window have failed, consider replacing the entire window unit. In the long run, this may be the best and most economical alternative.
- Replacement windows and doors should, where possible fit into the original opening, minimizing the amount of blocking and/or filler panels.
- Original door and window openings and accenting features should be maintained where practical.
- Consider the window opening. Do not alter the existing opening to fit the new windows.
- Consider window material and color; try to be historically correct to the time period of the building façade.
- The number of glass panes and the profile of windows for size and shape should match the originals as closely as possible.
- Insulating storm windows can help conserve heat and energy, but they often look out of place on older facades. For this reason, consider installation on the inside of the window where they will not be seen. If storm windows are installed on the outside, the design should match the existing window in shape, number, color and size of panes.



Display Window



Display Windows



Display Window

DOORS & ENTRYWAYS

The Front Door

Tall and stately in proportion, and built of wood with a large glass panel, the traditional storefront door looked substantial yet inviting to the customer. Modern aluminum doors lack historic character. However, this type of door cannot always be considered inappropriate. Its simple appearance makes it unobtrusive. But if you want to enhance the personality of your store, you should consider other options.



Aluminum Door



Glass Panel Door



Secondary Door

- The front door should be compatible with the rest of your storefront. The door should reinforce the character of your building as well as beckon customers inside.
- If your storefront retains its original character, a traditional wood door with a glass panel (as tall as possible) will reinforce the building's design.
- Choose a door based on the total design of the storefront. If you choose the standard aluminum and glass door, consider a dark, anodized finish rather than a light, metallic color.
- Try to find a salvaged older door to refurbish or purchase a new door that fits the storefront's appearance.
- Consider the use of subtle decorations on the door. A handsome doorknob or pull, a brass kick plate or an attractive painted sign on the glass is enough to turn your door into something special.
- If the doors in your building are old but workable, you should certainly consider keeping them.
- If the doors are made of wood, maintenance is very important. Keep them clean and in good working order. Check the wood for problems. Are portions of the wood soft, cracked or split? Does the door have insect damage? Pay particular attention to the threshold, bottom rail and hinge rail. Is the weather-stripping in good repair? Does the door fit snugly in the frame, or is it too tight? Check the hardware. Are the locks, hinges and closer in working order? Remember, it is often less expensive to repair a door than replace it.
- The secondary door – typically giving access to upper floors – traditionally is slightly more modest in design and usually not recessed as deeply. If you choose to maintain a traditional storefront design, an old solid or glass-paneled wood door is most appropriate.
- The secondary door should be less prominent than the storefront door. The second front door should fit into the overall façade without drawing undue attention.

Rear Entrances

The appearance of the back areas of buildings is important. A rear entrance is a potential benefit to a business by allowing direct entry from a parking lot into a building - **customers don't need to walk around the block to reach a shop.** If you do not have an attractive rear entrance to your business, but are considering making improvements, think about these issues:

- The rear entrance should be maintained and developed to support the overall appearance of the downtown and convenience of your customers.
- Like the storefront, the rear entry requires identification. It should be inviting and attractive. A glass panel in the back door is one way to open your store to potential customers. A small sign on or near the door is another way to identify your business.
- Dumpsters should be screened from view. Before constructing an enclosure, consult with the waste collection company to be sure that your design will not hamper their service. Also, contact the City Building Department to determine permit requirements for constructing a trash enclosure.

Upper Facade and Building Cornice

The visual importance of the upper facade and building cornice is evident in their steady march down Main Street. The windows in the upper facades are very important because they create a repeated pattern that creates a unified appearance.

Cornices

Building cornices are often constructed of sheet metal applied over a wood frame, decorative wood molding, brick or stone.

- Sheet metal cornices should be painted regularly to prevent rust. Replacements for missing pieces can be fabricated. Be sure to check the wood support structure for rot or insect damage; if found, replace the deteriorated portions.
- Decorative molded wood cornices should also be painted regularly. Missing or damaged pieces can be duplicated by a local wood worker.
- If a projecting masonry (brick or stone) cornice has been destroyed during a previous remodeling, consider duplicating the original cornice design in another material.



Rear Entrance



Upper Façade & Cornice



Façade & Cornice



Complementary Paint Colors



Complementary Paint Colors



Screened Mechanics

Paint Color

The color of a building, window trim or door is, to some extent, a personal decision. It is an expression of yourself and your commercial establishment. However, there are other issues to consider. The following guidelines can help you decide what colors to use on your building.

- Look at your building in the context of the entire block or downtown. The color of your building can affect the overall character of a street.
- Traditionally, building trim was painted as decoration, often in a contrasting shade lighter or darker than the primary building color. This paint treatment defined the trim, but it was not so overpowering that the trim colors dominated the building.
- Aluminum frames have frequently replaced traditional wood doors and windows. The shine and metallic color of aluminum does not complement historic buildings, therefore, paint it a more neutral color or choose darker, anodized frames.
- Paint color should be used to tie together all building elements, including the cornice, upper facade, windows, storefront and doors. To do this, limit the number of colors you use; in most cases, choose no more than three colors, and select complementary colors.
- Building color should be non-reflective and relate to existing neighborhood patterns. High intensity, florescent, day glow and/or neon, and metallic colors are discouraged; where such colors constitute a component of a standardized corporate theme or identity, muted versions of colors should be used.

Metering and Mechanicals

Metering and mechanicals are elements of utility service and mechanical heating, cooling and ventilation systems that are foreign to the architecture (transformers, gas and electric meters, rooftop units, etc.). Utility service boxes, cables, conduits, vents, turbines, flues, chillers and fans, telecommunication devices, trash/recycling storage receptacles should be screened from public view by incorporating the following design standards:

- Locate mechanical equipment and service areas at the rear of the building, along an alley façade or on the building rooftop;
- Screen mechanical equipment and service areas using architectural partitions or walls, screening devices and/or landscaping; and
- Locate rooftop mechanical equipment a sufficient distance from the building edge to screen the equipment from view of adjacent streets.

Building Materials

The choice of materials can be critical to the overall success of your building design. Again, take a cue from the traditional storefront, whose simple and unobtrusive materials emphasized display windows and the entry door. Today, many remodeled storefronts are made of materials that look out of place in the downtown because of color, texture or a combination of the two. Not only do they clash with traditional commercial building facades, often they are unattractive designs for any building.

As significant as materials is the way the materials are used. It is common to see a renovated facade that appears sloppy and disorganized because the materials have been carelessly applied. Haphazard combinations can destroy an otherwise pleasing design.

Primary exterior building materials should be similar and/or complementary to existing structures within the immediate area and the downtown area as a whole. Building materials should consider the facades of the structure and an adjoining structure to provide a suitable transition between facades. Where a side and/or rear elevation is not exposed to view from a public street, a combination of primary and secondary materials may be used.

Acceptable materials include glass, brick, ceramic tile, terra cotta, cultured stone, cut stone, carved stone, stucco, EIFS, wood, decorative concrete block. Stone or brick facing should be of relatively even coloration and consistent size. The use of non-decorative exposed concrete block, pre-engineered metal building systems, and sheet metal is discouraged. The use of plywood or Oriented Strand Board (OSB) or similar materials is prohibited. Metal roofs, decorative metal and metal accent components may be considered. Other building materials may be considered when appropriate to a property and the downtown as a whole.



Brick & Terra Cotta



Stucco



Decorative Stone



Brick Facade



Stone Facade



*Cast Iron on Column
Cornice Beam*

Historic Architectural Decoration

One of the most striking aspects of the traditional facade is the eye-catching detail. Historically, decoration was used freely to embellish the facade. Much of a downtown's visual character rests in its architectural detailing. It is a blend of architecture and sculpture, an example of craftsmanship that would be difficult and costly to reproduce today.

The first step in preserving detailing is to determine what kind of decoration you have. Six types of materials have been used for decoration:

- Brick
- Stone
- Cast-Iron and Sheet Metal
- Wood
- Terra Cotta
- Decorative Glass

Brick

Many of the problems that affect decorative brick are the same as for masonry in general (see "Masonry Cleaning"). In other cases, decorative brick work has been damaged during facade remodeling. If this is the problem, new replacement bricks of the same shape may be available or replacement decoration can be molded in a substitute material.

Stone

Stone decorations are also subject to many of the problems discussed in "Masonry Cleaning." Decorative stone is subject to erosion from windblown grit and chemicals contained in rain and snow. The surface may also flake off if water penetrates into the stone. These problems require expert advice but can be cured.

Cast-iron and Sheet Metal

With metal decoration, look for obvious signs of deterioration: corrosion, tears, holes and missing pieces. Look also for more subtle evidence, such as telltale rust and surface discoloration, often a sign of deterioration from within. A sagging cornice can mean deterioration in the supporting wood framing. Since the metal decoration is applied to the surface, check its anchoring to the wall. Minor deterioration can be quickly solved by properly preparing, priming and painting the decoration. If more extensive repairs are needed, a local, skilled metal worker can fabricate replacement parts. But again, remember to communicate your desire to preserve the decoration.

Wood

Wood decoration is very susceptible to deterioration. However, problems are easy to prevent through regular maintenance. When checking for problems, look for soft, dry or split areas in the wood surfaces, especially those exposed to harsh weather. Up to a point, problems can be fixed by filling and caulking the wood, then priming and painting. The wood may also be consolidated or hardened by using an epoxy injection. When repair is impossible, consult a local mill shop for a replacement piece that matches the existing detail.

Terra Cotta

Since terra cotta is a cast-masonry product, many of its potential problems are the same as those that affect brick. Other problems include cracking and chipping of the glazed surface. Also, check for loose anchoring of the terra cotta to the structural wall.

Terra cotta is a difficult material to work with – contact an expert for all maintenance and repair work. Great care should be exercised when dealing with this material because replacement terra cotta is extremely hard to find.

Decorative Glass

One of the problems with glass decoration is that many times it is covered up. Look for it in transoms or behind plywood window covers. Sagging, if it occurs, means that the glass and the frame need to be reinforced with a brace. Other problems often occur with old leaded or stained glass. The metal between the glass panes – the “**came**”- is zinc or lead. Always use the same metal when making repairs.

Summary

Any historic detail should be treated with care. First, maintain what you have. If necessary, repair or replace the detail by duplicating or complementing the original. In some cases, it is appropriate and less expensive to replace a missing or badly deteriorated architectural decoration with a different material. If a substitute material is considered, it should have the same appearance – texture, colors, size, shape and detailing – as the original. It is also important to be sure that when the temperature changes the substitute material will expand and contract at a rate similar to the original.



Wood & Brick Facade



Terra Cotta Facade



Decorative Glass



Sign Outline



Sign Illumination from above.



Illuminated Sign

Function and Purpose

Signs are a vital part of the streetscape and contribute to the overall image of downtown Fond du Lac. Not only is signage intended to call attention to your business, it creates an individual image for your building. The major function of a sign is to introduce the storefront and its contents. Because signs are an extremely visible element of the storefront, they must be used carefully so as not to distract from the facade. Signs should combine with the entire storefront to make a meaningful statement.

Consider the following guidelines in designing and utilizing signs:

- Wall sign design should take into consideration the age and architecture of the building. Simple, dimensional letters mounted in the sign panel area were popular **on buildings built around 1900. Look at the building's architectural features and try to mimic some of those features in the shape or design of the wall sign.** A sign outline that is complementary to the building design is preferred over a simple rectangular sign.
- A sign should not dominate the building facade and it should not obscure or destroy the architectural features of a building such as stone arches, glass transom panels or decorative brick work. Sign shape and proportion should fit the building in the same way a window or door fits. For example, a sign hung under the **cornice complements the building's architecture and therefore presents a strong image.**
- Sign size should be appropriate for the distance from which the sign will be viewed in the downtown setting. Utilizing a sign size that is the *maximum* allowed by City ordinances does not always produce the best results. Simple wording is easier to read by pedestrians and street traffic; *descriptive words* should be used, rather than *lists of items* for sale. Filling the sign panel area to the edges creates a crowded, cluttered look.

- Many of the historic buildings in downtown Fond du Lac have a sign panel area above the storefront window and door; wall signage should be mounted in this area only, below the sill of the second story windows.
- Architectural design regulations do not allow wall signs and projecting signs above the windowsill of the second story. Signs cannot obstruct any window, door, fire escape or stairway. Signs cannot interfere with public fixtures such as street trees, street lights, directional signs, traffic devices or streetscape elements.
- Use colors, materials and lettering size that harmonize with the building facade. Limit each sign to a maximum of three colors, two materials and one lettering style. Look at the color of your building and the colors you see on the surrounding structures, and take hints from these when selecting colors for your sign. Lettering should be scaled to occupy no more than 65 percent of the sign surface.
- Consider the use of sign materials other than plastic, such as wood, metal, stone, neon, canvas and etched glass. Each has unique qualities that can be exploited to create a sign suited to the building and your business needs. The most suitable use of plastic materials is to create a sign made of individually formed letters, **symbols or numbers**. **Internally lit florescent “box” signs are not allowed in the Downtown.**
- Sign illumination is important, but the light source should be as inconspicuous as possible. Lighting should be done tastefully to highlight the building and signage, using appropriate retro-styled fixtures for historic buildings. A neon wall sign should be used only if the design complements the age and design of the building. **Neon was popular from the 1920's to the 1940's.**
- Signs provided by national distributors are not appropriate; they do not reflect the individuality of a business and usually appear as add-ons to your storefront advertising. The signs you display should advertise your personal business message.



Sign Panel Area



Window Lettering



Wall Sign

SIGNAGE

Types of Signs

Various types of signs are permitted for businesses in Fond du Lac. It is advisable, however, to review the City of Fond du Lac Sign Ordinance to ensure compliance with requirements and restrictions.

Projecting Sign

This type of sign is affixed to a building wall to extend outward from the façade. A projecting sign is a historically appropriate consideration.

Wall Sign

A wall sign is mounted flush to the building wall to identify a business. Additional features of the business can often be promoted through the use of window lettering.

Temporary Sign

To advertise the opening of a new business, outdoor advertising devices such as streamers, pennants, banners, inflatable or three-dimensional product signs may be used on the property where the business is located.

Changeable Copy Sign

Changeable copy signs including manual reader boards and electronic message centers are not permitted in the Downtown. These types of signs are allowed for businesses that are not located in the Downtown Design District. Where permitted, the sign area of a readerboard or electronic message center must be incidental to the principal sign, and the color of the changeable copy should relate to colors of the building.

Sandwich Board Sign

This type of sign is temporary and portable, to be set outside of a building during the business day. A sandwich board sign is intended to promote goods or services provided by the business occupying the site for which the sign serves.

Mural

Murals should follow these guidelines:

- Size should be appropriate in proportion to the scale of the building/property, and the location of the mural should consider the nature of adjacent land uses.
- The content of the mural may not advertise a product or service.
- The mural should be painted by a professional using accepted industry techniques and methods to ensure long-lasting quality and ease of upkeep.
- The mural should be painted on a secondary surface to be attached to the building for easy removal and ease of maintenance.
- The mural should be regularly maintained by a professional service, taking care to address color fading, degradation of materials, vandalism, etc.
- The mural should be removed when it becomes unsightly and/or is not maintained.

Hand Painted Signs

Where a projecting sign and/or wall sign is permitted, the sign composition may include commercial or professional hand painted art work (text, graphics, background etc.). Hand painted signs must be maintained in good condition for the life of the sign, taking care to address color fading, degradation of materials and vandalism. A hand painted sign must be removed when it becomes unsightly and/or is not maintained.



Projecting Sign



Wall Sign



Sandwich Sign

An awning or canopy can be both a decorative and a functional addition to a storefront. It serves as an energy saver by regulating the amount of sunlight that enters the windows. Shaded by an awning or canopy, shoppers are enticed to stop, look and step inside.

As a visual element, an awning or canopy can add character and interest to your storefront. You should think about how it will appear in relation to the scale of your building. Awning and canopy size, color and placement should complement the architectural character of a building. How will it affect existing architectural features? Will it overpower the proportion of your windows and facade? Look at neighboring buildings and imagine what impact the addition of an awning or canopy will have on the character of the streetscape. Internal illumination or backlighting is discouraged.

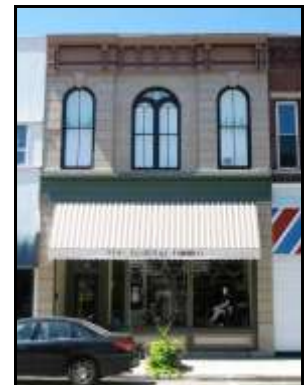
Awnings and canopies should be the same type and style for a single building or property and utilize the same mounting characteristics. Awnings on a single building should have a consistent horizontal alignment across the front of the entire building, unless the slope of a pedestrian walk or ground requires a horizontal stagger.

Awnings can be constructed from a variety of materials. Soft, weather-treated canvas or vinyl materials which allow for flexible or fixed installations should be used. Canvas is traditionally popular. Modern canvas materials are available in many colors and are very durable. Vinyl awnings are often very shiny and therefore inappropriate for many downtown buildings. Canopies are usually constructed of metal. When considering a color for your awning or canopy, look at the entire building. Select an awning or canopy color that enhances the features of the building features. Awning patterns are important too. Plain and simple, striped or bold solid - what image do you want to convey?

An awning or canopy requires a permit approved by the City of Fond du Lac. Consult with City officials for regulations for minimum clearance from sidewalks, etc. Awnings and canopies have long been used to display the names of businesses. If you choose to include a business name or logo on your awning or canopy, keep the text simple.



Striped Awning



Striped Awning



Canopy

Masonry Cleaning

As in most Wisconsin cities, most of Fond du Lac's buildings are constructed of brick masonry. With proper care, a brick building can last for hundreds of years. Gentle methods of cleaning are especially important because the damage caused by improper cleaning cannot be reversed.



Do not assume that all masonry needs cleaning. Masonry cleaning should be done to remove excess dirt and layers of paint; the goal should not be to make the brick appear new or to remove the patina of age. There are, however, functional reasons for cleaning masonry. Dirty areas on brick or stone remain wet longer than other building materials. This dampness can promote chemical reactions that lead to deterioration. Additionally, harmful microorganisms also thrive in dirt, in time damaging the building surface.



A word of caution – improper cleaning can cause masonry deterioration to accelerate. After several years, this deterioration can affect the structural stability of your building. In addition, before deciding to remove paint from a building, particularly one made of brick; try to determine if the building has always been painted. Some of **Main Street's masonry buildings were built of soft brick that was meant to be painted** as protection from the weather.

Processes

Several methods are used to clean masonry buildings. It is most important to understand how your building material will interact, physically and chemically, with the cleaner. Choosing one method over another should be based on:

- The amount and type of dirt to be removed
- The amount and type of paint to be removed
- The type and condition of the masonry



Water Cleaning

Washing with water and a detergent is the simplest and safest of all methods and is successful on lightly soiled masonry. The first step is to presoak the masonry to remove dirt that is not tightly bonded to the surface. The second step involves scrubbing with a hand or power brush. Be sure to use only bristle brushes, not metal. Metal can disturb the mortar and damage masonry.



High-Pressure Water Cleaning

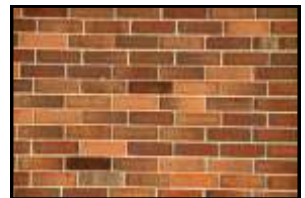
This method uses special equipment that develops enough hydraulic pressure to “force-spray” masonry. The high pressure injects water into crevices on the surface of the masonry, forcing out dirt and staining. High-pressure water cleaning should be done by qualified professionals and should not exceed 1,000 p.s.i.



Chemical Cleaning

Chemical cleaning works best for paint removal and eliminating deep stains. Care must be taken in the use of acids, even in a diluted solution. Acids can permanently damage limestone, marble and other materials.

Due to the large variety of chemicals available, their potential toxicity, the difficulty of proper disposal and the need for special equipment, chemical cleaning should be done by a qualified professional.



Abrasive Blasting

Sandblasting, grit blasting, high-pressure grit washing and any other process that uses a high pressure abrasive spray should NEVER be used on brick, wood, stone or pressed metal. Blast cleaning of any type will rip off the protective surfaces of brick and other materials, exposing soft interiors to the elements and drastically accelerating deterioration. There is no way to fix the damage caused by sandblasting.



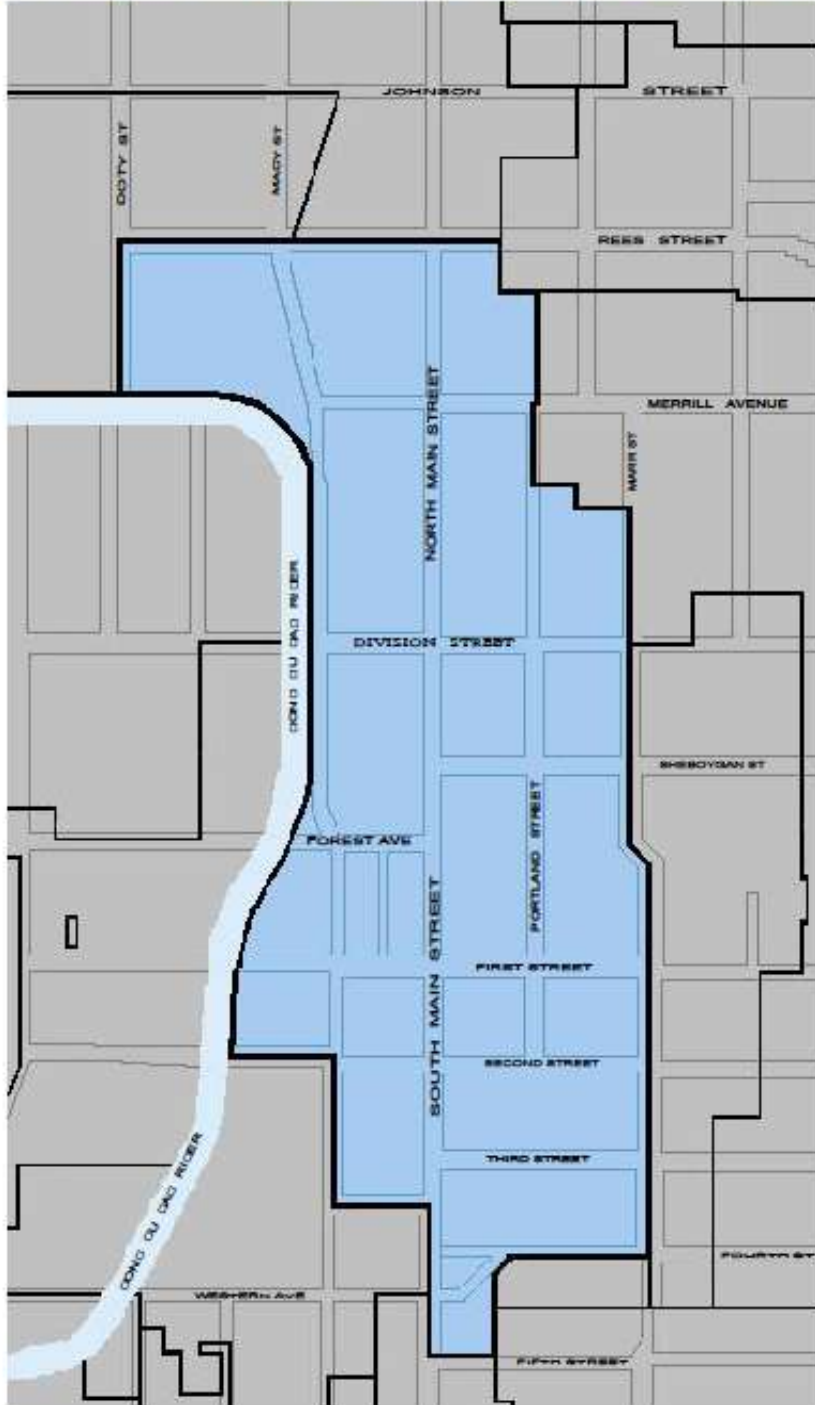
City Building, Design & Sign Codes

Properties in the downtown are subject to these Design Guidelines as well as code requirements of the Downtown Design Overlay District. Depending on the nature of your project, review and approval by the Downtown Architectural Review Board may be required. Additionally, your project must conform to local and state building codes **and other regulations. It is advisable to contact the City's Community Development office for guidance with the following:**

- Downtown Design Overlay District (Zoning Code)
- Sign ordinance
- Building and fire codes
- Historic Preservation code and regulations
- Other applicable regulations



DOWNTOWN DESIGN OVERLAY DISTRICT



City of Fond du Lac Downtown Design Review

Applicability

The Downtown Design Overlay District encompasses the general area of Downtown Fond du Lac extending from Rees Street to Fifth Street. Changes to properties in the Downtown - such as signage, painting, roofing, restoration, repairs, additions - are subject to the Zoning Code regulations for the Downtown Design District and the *Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership Design Guidelines*. Most projects require review and approval of the Downtown Architectural Review Board prior to the issuance of permits.

Certain minor actions may be approved by the Community Development Department, such as the addition or replacement of windows or doors complementary to the color and architectural style of the building, and the addition or replacement of awnings and canopies. Alteration of a building façade that is not visible from a public street or alley and/or the interior remodeling of an existing structure does not trigger architectural design standards. Where a property is a City-designated historic site or structure, the Historic Preservation Commission must review and approve exterior alterations, additions and/or signage; separate review by the Downtown Architectural Review Board is not required.

Project Review & Approval

The Downtown Design Overlay District regulations are administered by the Downtown Architectural Review Board. Members include design and construction professionals, downtown business owners, and others that possess knowledge of architectural design principles. The Board serves the long-range interest of the Downtown and is charged with the task to approve projects that positively affect the value of property in the Downtown. Where an **applicant wishes to contest a decision of the Downtown Architectural Review Board, an appeal of the Board's action** may be considered by the Board of Appeals. The Board of Appeals will consider the particular circumstances of a proposed project as it relates to the property and affirm, modify or deny an appeal of a decision of the Downtown Architectural Review Board.

Project Application

The Downtown Architectural Review Board meets monthly, on the first Tuesday at 12:00 p.m. The meeting is held at the City County Government Center, 160 South Macy Street, in Meeting Rooms D-E. The project applicant should plan to attend the meeting. Project applications and supporting materials must be filed at the Community Development Department one week prior to the meeting date.

The DARB will approve, conditionally approve or deny a project. In making its decision the DARB considers information provided by the applicant, requirements of the Downtown Design Overlay District and the *Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership Design Guidelines*. Design considerations include colors and materials; architectural elements; the physical and architectural relationship of the proposal with the existing and proposed structures; appropriateness of sign design, materials, colors and lighting. The Board does not have the authority to waive, modify or allow any deviation from the requirements of the Building Code, Zoning Code or any ordinances or regulations. The action of the Board is separate and apart from any determination regarding the conformance of a proposal with ordinances and regulations of the City of Fond du Lac.

