CITY OF DIXON

HISTORIC PRESERVATION GUIDELINES
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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES

The purpose of these guidelines is three-fold:

- to educate
- to inspire
- to provide a document that can be adopted, in whole or in part, as design standards for local historic designations

The primary purpose of the guidelines is to educate the community on appropriate design considerations for older structures or new structures in historic areas. There is a growing interest and demand for quality older buildings and homes. Many owners and potential buyers would like to recapture the historic character of their building or home but don’t know where to begin. These guidelines will assist property owners or new buyers in two ways: 1) in identifying and maintaining the property’s important historical features; and 2) in providing ideas and guidance for appropriate alterations if repairs or additions are needed to make the structure more functional or livable.

The second purpose of the guidelines is to inspire all who believe Dixon’s best historic areas have been lost to demolition or thoughtless remodeling. There are many historic and quality older buildings, homes and neighborhoods waiting to be rediscovered. For historic preservation to occur, it is vital that owners, real estate agents, bankers, contractors and city officials realize that historic quality is often not lost - it may simply be hidden behind inappropriate remodeling. There will always be a market for buildings, homes and neighborhoods with historic character. Older homes on smaller lots are the backbone of most communities because they serve as starter homes. Nationally, demographics show the population aging and the typical household size shrinking. As the number of retirees grows, so will the demand for smaller dwellings and a wider choice of neighborhood. In numerous towns, downtowns have been revitalized and entire residential blocks have been restored as family neighborhoods due to the pioneering restorations of a few who gave the rest courage to invest. With vision, inspiration and targeted investments, Dixon’s downtown and older neighborhoods can be rediscovered to provide the quality older buildings and homes with unique character that many desire and every community needs.

The third purpose of the guidelines is to provide a prototype document for the negotiation of design standards for local historic designations. When owners or neighborhood groups are approached for possible designation, the content of design standards is often the first concern. These guidelines will provide information and show the possible range of topics to be covered. After negotiation with individual owners or neighborhood groups, the guidelines may be modified or adopted in whole or in part for that particular designation.
ROLE AND PURPOSE OF THE DIXON PRESERVATION COMMISSION

The Dixon Preservation Commission was created in 1998 when the City Council adopted the City's first Preservation Ordinance. The Commission is composed of five appointed citizens who have expertise or interest in historic preservation or related fields. The Commission receives professional staff support from the City's Building & Zoning Department. The Commission's purpose and role is to promote the identification, designation, preservation and protection of Dixon's historic buildings, homes and neighborhoods. The Preservation Commission uses the procedures set forth in the preservation ordinance to designate local landmarks and historic districts and to review subsequent exterior changes to those properties.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

An essential component in the designation process is the adoption of design standards to guide future exterior maintenance or alteration of historic properties. The Dixon Preservation Commission works with historic property owners to develop design standards flexible enough to protect the historic character while allowing for creativity and compromise in individual situations. Once a property or district is designated, the Preservation Commission reviews plans for exterior changes and approves the plans with a Certificate of Appropriateness if they comply with the adopted design standards for that property or district. In some instances, the adopted design standards will list exterior changes that do not require Preservation Commission review. If the Preservation Commission denies a Certificate of Appropriateness, the Preservation Ordinance provides for an appeal process to the City Council.

COMPLIANCE WITH CITY CODES

These guidelines will not override or supersede the City of Dixon's normal construction codes, in the event they are adopted, in whole or in part, as the design standards for the designation of a landmark or historic district.

All construction projects within the City limits, with the exception of certain rootless structures, are subject to the City of Dixon's zoning, subdivision, building, electrical, plumbing and sign codes. In addition to the above, commercial and multi-family residential projects are also subject to the City's fire and handicapped accessibility codes. In the City's one and one-half mile jurisdiction area, construction projects are subject only to the City's zoning, subdivision and sign codes. Questions concerning zoning and subdivision codes should be directed to the City's Building & Zoning Department.
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Dixon Preservation Commission will maintain an extensive library of reference materials and information on all aspects of historic preservation, design, maintenance and construction. The staff of the City of Dixon’s Building & Zoning Department can answer your questions and/or refer you to the appropriate technical information from the Commission’s library.

* FACADE LOAN PROGRAM

Loan programs may be available from time to time through the City of Dixon or through local banks. Contact the Building and Zoning Department for details and availability.

FEDERAL TAX CREDITS*

Federal Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credits (ITC) are credits applied to an owner’s federal taxes owed or to future tax liabilities. The credit is typically worth a percentage of the value of renovation. Some credits have an application process and each have some project requirements. It is recommended that applicants for the tax credits consult with an experienced accountant and/or tax attorney, as claiming the credits may draw special attention to your tax return by the IRS. Expenditures claimed for one tax credit are typically not eligible for another credit.
10% Investment Tax Credit

The 10% ITC is designated for "non-historic" buildings built before 1936. (Non-historic refers to buildings not listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Historic buildings are not eligible for the 10% ITC). The credit is work 10% of the amount spent renovating the building. Properties must be depreciable, that is they must be income producing from commercial or industrial uses. Income-producing residential and owner-occupied housing are not eligible. Owners many be individuals or businesses and must pay federal income taxes.

Requirements for the 10% ITC are few. The amount spent on the renovation project must be greater than the "adjusted basis" of the building at the start of the project, or a minimum of $5,000. Owners have 24 months to complete the project. All interior and exterior work within the framework of the building itself is eligible. Eligible work includes masonry repair, exterior painting, interior remodeling, and mechanical work. Examples of ineligible work include building, additions, appliances, furniture and fixtures. Three quarter of the exterior walls must be retained.

No application is necessary for the 10% ITC. The credit may be taken by filing the appropriate form with IRS on the tax return for the year the credit is to be claimed. Documentation of renovation expenditures must be retained.

20% Investment Tax Credit for Historic Buildings

The 20% ITC is designed for "historic" buildings (those listed on the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as contributing to a district.) The credit is worth 20% of the amount spent renovating the building. Properties must be depreciable, that is they must be income producing from commercial, industrial, or residential uses. Owner-occupied housing is not eligible. Owners may be individuals or businesses and must pay federal income taxes.

Because eligible buildings are historically significant, there are several project requirements for the 20% ITC. The amount spent on the renovation project must be greater than the "adjusted basis" of the building at the start of the project, or a minimum of $5,000. Owners have 24 months to complete the project, though owners may qualify for a 60 month phased schedule. All interior and exterior work within the framework of the building itself is eligible. Eligible work includes masonry repair, exterior painting, interior remodeling and mechanical work. Examples of ineligible work include building additions, appliances, furniture and fixtures. The project also must be reviewed and certified by the National Park Services through the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA). Approval of proposed work typically takes from 3 to 6 months.
For certification, the project must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The Standards do not require restoring a building or its features to its original appearance, but instead require the preservation of as much of the existing historic features and materials as possible.

The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency works closely with applicants to review the project and devise solutions to any potential problems. IHPA will also answer questions about the credit and about proper preservation techniques and guide the owner through the application process.

For more information on tax credits contact:

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
1 Old State Capitol Plaza
Springfield, IL 629701
271-785-4512

Internal Revenue Service
800-829-1040


STATE PROPERTY TAX ASSESSMENT FREEZE PROGRAM*

The State of Illinois offers the Property Tax Assessment Freeze Program which provides tax incentives to owner-occupants of certified historic residences who rehabilitate their homes. Through the Property Tax Assessment Freeze Program the assessed valuation of the historic property is frozen for eight years at its level the year rehabilitation began. The valuation then is brought back to market level over a period of four years.

To qualify for the Property Tax Assessment Freeze a property must:

1) be a registered historic structure, either by listing on the National Register of Historic places, or designated by an approved local historic preservation ordinance;

2) be used as a single-family, owner-occupied residence;

3) have at least 25% of the property’s market value spent on an approved rehabilitation project
The overall guideline is to retain original materials and architectural components of historic buildings in the Downtown District. If these are beyond repair, replace them with materials that duplicate the size, shape and finish of the original.

The owner of a building with restoration potential has the opportunity to restore the building to its original beauty. Removal of a building's original decorative and ornamental features destroys its unique identity and reduces its value.

If total restoration is not feasible, the original decorative cornices, windows, storefront elements and ornament should not be removed as it precludes restoring the building at a later date.

Typical Storefront Components
Maintain horizontal alignment of adjoining buildings and traditional storefront patterns

1) Maintain cornice alignment and height
2) Maintain upper window pattern
3) Maintain major horizontal line at signboard area
4) Maintain pattern of recessed entries
5) Maintain kickplate at traditional height

HORIZONTAL ALIGNMENT OF ADJOINING BUILDINGS

- Maintain the horizontal lines of the original storefront and the block

Many of the two story buildings in the Downtown District were built at the turn of the century. They have similar heights which are usually emphasized by cornices. This horizontal line is important to the visual continuity of the area. Some horizontal element of the upper facade should align with other upper facades. Another prominent horizontal line occurs between the upper and lower facades at the signboard or transom area. Awnings and flush sign panels can reinforce this horizontal line and provide a unifying element in the block.

STOREFRONTS

- Maintain or restore the original recessed entryway.

When renovating existing storefronts, preserve the original recessed entryway, or when necessary, develop a new recessed entry. The recurring rhythm of recessed entrances helps unify the entire block, provides more display space and encourages pedestrian browsing.
• Maintain the size and shape of the original display windows and do not cover them by painting or other means to render them opaque.

• Display windows should be well-lit at night

The "open" quality of continuous storefront windows along a block is conducive to a pleasant pedestrian and shopping experience. The disruption of a "closed" storefront can break the shopping mood. It tends to rebuff pedestrians instead of inviting them to browse the windows or enter the building. Pedestrians and motorists also feel safer on a block with "open storefronts" since they can see and be seen by others inside and outside buildings. If a non-retail use such as an office or church needs privacy from the street, use non-permanent draperies, blinds, shutters or other devices installed behind the glass at the back of the display windows. The display windows of non-retail uses can then feature community art or information thereby providing an uninterrupted pedestrian experience both day and night.

• Retain or restore the original kickplate as a decorative panel. If the original kickplate cannot be saved, do not install glass in place of the original kickplate or increase its height.

The kickplate height establishes a very important horizontal line which should align with other kickplates along the block. Historically, kickplates extended approximately 18” to 24” above the sidewalk level. Many kickplates in the Downtown District area have already been raised to an inappropriate height. Maintain the original kickplate height even if adjoining stores have raised or lowered theirs.

Inappropriate facade materials and "closed out" storefront
Building detail has been obscured. Vertical board and batten siding is inappropriate as is the diagonal application. Pedestrians feel "closed out" and often unsafe when display windows are reduced in size or covered over.
FACADE COVERINGS

- Remove coverings from upper facades where feasible to reveal original building windows and features.

- Remove inappropriate metal canopies, mansard roofs and "add-ons."

Metal canopies distract from the original historic and architectural character of the upper facades, isolating them from the store level and confine shoppers in a corridor effect. Their uniformity imposes a sameness that detracts from each store's individuality. All stores under a continuous canopy present one identity to passers-by rather than revealing the uniqueness of individual buildings.

FACADE MATERIALS

- Maintain brick as the predominant material for major building surfaces in the Downtown District.

Brick is by far the most commonly used building material in the Downtown District area. The repetition of brick contributes to the visual continuity of the area.

- Maintain the original facade materials. If deteriorated beyond repair, replacement materials should be the same in form, shape, texture, pattern and color.

- Inappropriate facade materials for historic buildings in the Downtown District include: vertical board and batten siding, artificial brick or stone (permastone), wood shake shingles, unpainted wood, unpainted metal, fiberglass, aluminum and vinyl siding and dryvit (EIFS - Exterior Insulating Finishing System) in large quantities.

Historically, the lower facade was framed with painted cast iron components readily available from catalogs at the turn of the century. The kickplate was typically constructed out of brick or recessed wood panels. Historic trim materials were painted wood, painted metal, and sandstone or limestone window trim on upper facades. Other materials historically used for commercial facades (though not common in Dixon) are glazed terra cotta tile, carrara glass and structural cut stone (not artificial stone or stone veneers). For additional information regarding facade materials, refer to the "Exterior Materials and Maintenance" section of this publication.

WINDOWS

- Maintain the style, size and shape of the original upper story windows.

If the windows are now concealed, expose them to reveal the original pattern. The type, size, shape and placement of windows and window trim are key elements in the visual character and style of historic structures. Original windows and window trim should be retained and repaired if possible using
replacement components that match the original in material, shape and size. Many downtown buildings have vertically oriented double hung windows on the upper stories. These windows are usually about twice as tall as they are wide. The original rhythm of window sizes, spacing and location should be maintained from one facade to the next for continuity along the block.

- Window openings should not be blocked down or reduced in size to accommodate a smaller, standard replacement window. If original window-openings have been reduced or enlarged, restoring them to the original opening size is encouraged.

To reduce energy loss, existing windows can be inexpensively reglazed by local glass shops and then weather-stripped. These costs are insignificant compared to the cost of replacement windows.

- If replacement windows are unavoidable, new window sashes should match the original in size, type, material, glass size and glass configuration.

- Interior storm windows are preferred. However, exterior storm windows when used should have a painted or colored finish, not clear raw metal.

Interior storm windows are preferred. Exterior storm windows are appropriate provided they cause no damage to the original frame, they are removable and they are painted appropriately. Aluminum storm windows can, and should, be painted to match or complement the window trim. The use of clear or mill-finished aluminum frames is not appropriate.

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS AND ORNAMENTATION

- Preserve original architectural detailing. If original details are presently covered, expose them and incorporate them into the facade design.

Many architectural details now covered have not actually been destroyed. These details contribute to the historic interest to the downtown.

- Reconstruction of portions of original buildings may be appropriate if sufficient documentation exists to assure that the reconstruction is accurate.
Don’t misrepresent history by creating what appear to be “historic details” when no evidence of original detailing exists. In some cases, a portion of the ornamentation remains from which models or copies can be made. Old photographs often yield information about the original facade.

- Contemporary modifications may be appropriate where historic elements have already been lost.

Where no evidence of original historic elements such as storefront, upper facade, or cornice exists, contemporary redesigns may be substituted, provided the historic proportions of the building are maintained. In this situation, simplification of historic style details is encouraged rather than imitation of historical styles. Authentic historical detailing is difficult to imitate correctly and it often competes with and detracts from actual historic buildings. If you can’t find what was there originally, it is best to do something new that will reinforce other patterns and lines along the block.

- Avoid “colonial”, quaint or cute details such as shutters, small multi-paned windows, coach lanterns, brass eagles, hitching posts, wagon wheels, false adobe logs, etc.

These decorative details are not appropriate to the late 19th Century and 20th Century buildings in the Downtown District.

CLEANING AND SURFACE COATINGS

A full discussion of the most common building materials found in the Downtown District along with proper repair and cleaning methods is contained in the “Exterior Materials and Maintenance” section of this publication. Below are several considerations relative to brick which are discussed in more detail in “Exterior Materials & Maintenance.”

- Do not sandblast or use strong chemical cleaners on building facades, as it may damage the masonry.

- Where masonry has been painted, it is usually best to leave it that way and simply repaint with latex paint.

- Masonry surfaces which have not been previously painted should not be painted or coated with impervious waterproof coatings.

COLOR SCHEMES

- Develop a color scheme which blends with and complements surrounding structures.

Color within the Downtown District area should be used to create continuity. The selection of colors for each building’s masonry, mortar, signage, paints and awnings should be made with regard to all neighboring buildings. Cooperation among neighbors in color choices can produce a distinctive overall effect without loss of individuality. Color should never be used to call attention to a building. A building within an historical area is enhanced by its ability to blend harmoniously with its surroundings.
• Earth colors are recommended for the downtown area. A maximum of three (3) colors is best for most facades.

Earth colors, such as reds, browns, greens, golds and grays, are historically and aesthetically the most suitable for older commercial structures. Soft pastels and clear bright colors are out of character and should be avoided. Do not be tempted to paint interesting architectural details many different colors. A building spotted with numerous colors begins to look chaotic and garish. One carefully chosen color is often quite sufficient. A contrasting color may be appropriate to accent the doorway, cornice, or window lintels, especially if they are made from a material different from the rest of the facade.

• Develop a color scheme for the entire facade which makes it read as a cohesive whole.

• If the building was originally plain brick, but was painted sometime in its past, consider using a paint color that simulates the original brick color.

An appropriate color scheme is extremely important in the overall facade design. It can tie signs, ornamentation, awnings and entrances together. Before beginning to paint, be certain that the color is correct. Choose a color that is subdued, for the sheer mass of a building will make the color appear considerably brighter than on a small paint chip. Paint a sample area first. Wait for it to dry, and then stand back and imagine how the entire building will appear when painted the color.

AWNINGS

• Awnings are historically correct for buildings in the Downtown District.

Unlike metal canopies, colorful awnings impart a festive atmosphere. Awnings can be color coordinated with the entire facade, thereby reinforcing the building’s individuality. Unlike metal canopies, they can be retracted to bring more light into the store on dark or winter days. Awnings signages near the street level is more easily seen by pedestrians and motorists which means the signage on the upper facade can be eliminated or reduced in size. Street level awnings should have a valance about 12 inches wide. The bottom of the valance should be no less then 8 feet above the pavement. Awnings are also quite effective on upper story windows. Awnings on upper vertical windows should not extend more than half way down the windows and should have a lower valance that is approximately 10 inches wide. Their color and style should complement any street level awnings. Canvas awnings are most appropriate. Synthetic awnings are acceptable provided they do not have a glossy or leatherette finish. Back-lighting of awnings is not appropriate to historic areas.
Streetwall Pattern, Rhythm and Walls of Continuity

Notice the continuities and rhythms across the entire block. Individual detailing can be appreciated but the various components work together to create a unified streetwall pattern. Examples of continuities are the similar building heights, upper window patterns, signboard alignments, canopy alignments, similar display window sizes and kickplate heights. Examples of rhythm are the similar building widths (or facades divided into smaller sections approximating adjoining stores), the reoccurring progression of recessed entries and the ornamental details on the upper facade which carry one's eye from building to building.

Block continuity has been lost

Newly remodeled building does not maintain average heights, horizontal building alignments or display window proportions. Corrugated metal on upper facade, flat metal canopy and raw aluminum storefront systems are inappropriate materials for historic storefront blocks.
NEW CONSTRUCTION IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA

The overall guideline for incorporating new storefronts into the Downtown area is continuity, not imitation or the creation of a false historic appearance. The ideal is quality design that maintains its own identity yet conforms to the predominant two-story building patterns of the Downtown.

Suggestions

- New construction on and around the Downtown should maintain the two-story character of the original blocks facing the Street.

Over the years, many of the original two and three-story buildings facing the Street have burned or been demolished and replaced with one-story buildings or parking lots. When this happens, a "hole" is created in the "urban fabric". The scale, richness and architectural variety provided by the two-story streetwall is then disrupted and the sense of "place" is diminished. Motorists and pedestrians feel as if they have "arrived" at a "place" when it is relatively enclosed and the unified identity is greater than the sum of its parts. In contrast, people often feel as if they are merely "passing through" an area of one-story buildings when there is not sufficient architectural presence to overpower the flat expanse of streets and parking lots.

This special sense of "place" can be maintained and enhanced by enclosing the Downtown with two-story buildings similar to the original street at the turn of the century. At that time, the two and three-story facades encircling all four sides of the Street created the sense of a vibrant urban room bustling with people and activity. Given the distance across the Street, one-story buildings are not large enough in scale to achieve the enclosure and intimacy necessary to create a sense of "place". The second story facade is needed to supply the large scale architectural richness, texture and variety capable of holding one's eye at a distance.

HORIZONTAL ALIGNMENT AND HEIGHT

- New two-story buildings and additions should maintain the major horizontal lines of other two-story buildings on the block.

Maintaining similar building heights and horizontal lines helps unify an entire block. Building heights need not match exactly, but some horizontal element of the new cornice should align with other cornices. There are other major horizontal lines created by the second story windows and the existing signboard area between the upper and lower facades which should be continued across the new building or addition.

- The facades of new one-story buildings and additions should be extended vertically to create the illusion of a second story.
As stated previously, an extremely high front parapet wall can be constructed on the front of a one-story building to make its facade visually blend into a two-story streetwall. This front parapet creates a blank canvas upon which the major horizontal lines of the block can be repeated.

The most commonly used upper window at the turn-of-the-century was a vertically oriented double hung window with a height approximately twice its width. The upper window placement is new buildings and additions should repeat the predominant rhythm and spacing patterns found on the block.

BUILDING WIDTH
- New buildings and additions should maintain the existing pattern of building widths along the block.

If the new building is to be wider than average, consideration should be given that the facade be divided into several visual segments or bays which approximate the other building widths on the block.

BUILDING SETBACK
- New buildings and additions should be placed at the sidewalk edge to maintain the existing pedestrian patterns.

The pedestrian streetscape's rhythm is disrupted when building facades are not in alignment along the sidewalk. There may be instances where it is desirable to recess a new building or addition's facade from the sidewalk. An example would be to create a sidewalk café next to or between two buildings. In this instance, a visual line between the sidewalk and the café can be established with landscaping, period fencing, a decorative screen, an overhead trellis, a row of columns or any combination of these elements.

UPPER FACADE WINDOWS
- New buildings and additions should maintain the vertical upper-story windows and window patterns established by turn-of-the-century buildings in the Downtown.
Wider than average building with upper facade design divided into three sections. By dividing the upper facade into smaller sections, a wider than average building can be visually integrated into a block of smaller stores.

Setback and horizontal alignment contribute to streetwall pattern. New buildings and additions should be placed at the sidewalk to align with other buildings on the block. If this is not possible or desirable, create an alignment at the sidewalk using overhead trellis, fencing, landscaping, columns or a combination of these elements.
Streetwall Pattern, Rhythm and Walls of Continuity
Notice the continuities and rhythms across the entire block. Individual detailing can be appreciated but the various components work together to create a unified streetwall pattern. Examples of continuities are the similar building heights, upper window patterns, signboard alignments, canopy alignments, similar display window sizes and kickplate heights. Examples of rhythm are the similar building widths (or facades divided into smaller sections approximating adjoining stores), the reoccurring progression of recessed entries and the ornamental details on the upper facade which carry one's eye from building to building.

Inappropriate infill construction.
Block continuity has been lost. New building does not maintain average heights, horizontal building alignments or display window proportions. Corrugated metal on upper facade, flat metal canopy and raw aluminum storefront system are inappropriate materials for historic storefront blocks.
STOREFRONT PATTERN

- New buildings and additions should feature recessed entries and the same storefront window alignments as turn-of-the-century buildings in the Downtown.

In the Downtown area, many existing buildings have been extensively remodeled. Many recessed entries have been removed or remodeled (usually by raising the kickplate and reducing the window size). New buildings should adhere to the original storefront proportions established by other turn-of-the-century buildings in the Downtown, rather than duplicating the inappropriate proportions of adjoining buildings. (See guidelines below)

Examples of correct storefront proportions can be seen on ____. When display windows line up and recessed entries occur at regular intervals, it creates a strong visual rhythm that unifies the entire block.

AWNINGS, FACADE MATERIALS, DETAILS, ORNAMENTATION AND COLOR

For these building elements, new buildings and additions should follow the guidelines in the "Preserving and Restoring Existing Storefronts" section of this publication.

Maintain horizontal alignment of adjoining buildings & traditional storefront patterns
1) Maintain cornice alignment and height
2) Maintain upper window pattern
3) Maintain major horizontal line at signboard area
4) Maintain pattern of recessed entries
5) Maintain kickplate at traditional height
SIGNAGE

WHAT DOES YOUR BUILDING SAY?

Selecting signage is one of the most important design decisions a business owner makes. However, the positive image created by a sensitively restored and well-maintained building speaks much louder than a sign. The ideal combination is a sign integrated with the building’s architecture so that the entire building advertises the business.

SIGN PERMITS

Prior to erecting any sign in a “historic district” a drawing must be submitted. A sign permit must be obtained from the Building and Zoning Department of the City of Dixon.

TYPES OF SIGNS

First consider the building’s facade and what type of sign will be appropriate. The most common signs are:

- Flush Wall Signs

In the past, signboards were used on most commercial buildings. They were usually placed in a specifically designed spot above the transoms, between the storefront and the upper facade. Today, signboards can still be very effective.
GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE SIGNAGE:

- Use Signage to identify businesses, not advertise products.

- Align signs horizontally with others on the block when feasible.

Look at your building facade in relation to the adjacent stores and buildings. Could there be some overall order given to the signs? It may be possible for all signs within your block to line up using the existing signboard area. This can establish visual continuity along the storefronts, and at the same time, provide uniform sight lines for viewers. Alignment makes all signs more readable at a glance. In many situations, aligning signs is just not possible. In these cases, look for other ways to organize signs within the block to create a visual continuity. For example, each store on the block could be placed on the front of the awning or above the store entrance. All signs could be placed in the display windows in similar fashion.

- Signs should not overpower the building facade.

The facade should appear as a single harmonious composition with signs subordinate in size to the other facade elements. Transom windows should not be covered to create a larger signboard area. In general, one flush wall sign used in conjunction with one special sign - on glass, on the awning, or projecting - should be enough. Where several businesses are in one building, consider using a directory to consolidate many individual names.

- Position signs so they will not obscure existing architectural details.

Look at your building or store facade. Do any architectural details suggest a location, size or shape for your sign? These could be decorative bands, or brickwork panels indented in the face materials. These features can be emphasized by placing your sign to fit within them.

Appropriate signage is incorporated into the building's architecture
• Window Signs

Another type of sign that is appropriate and that was common at the turn-of-the-century was painted directly on the inside of the window. Typically, these signs were gold-leafed, an art which for the most part has disappeared. The use of regular paint is a satisfactory substitute. Positioned at eye level, this type of sign can be particularly effective when used in conjunction with flush wall projecting signs.

• Projecting Signs

Signs hung perpendicularly to the facade were commonly used on older buildings. Hanging signs, which are especially suitable for displaying symbols and logos, can be designed in many shapes and hung with attractive hardware. Whereas flush wall signs are designed primarily to be viewed from cars and from across the street, perpendicular signs are designed for pedestrians.

• Awnings Over the Display Windows

In addition to providing protection for both shoppers and merchandise displays, awnings offer an opportunity for attractive signage. Lettering or symbols can be incorporated into the valance. The color and striped pattern of the awning can also reinforce the signage colors and the store’s identity.

• Display Windows. Real Product on Display

Display windows communicate important information to potential customers. Display windows are an essential part of a store’s image. Simplicity generally insures successful displays. Good color schemes and lighting are important. Window displays should be lighted tastefully at night to attract window shoppers. A display which changes periodically can convey more information about available products than any number of signs. Temporary paper signs on the glass surface can be useful for sales and special events, but they must be brief and small. Temporary signs left in place too long lose their effect.

• Symbol Signs

Symbols add interest to the street, are quickly read, and are remembered better than written words.
• **Signage Materials**

Signage materials should be appropriate for the Downtown area. In fact, plastic signage is usually not compatible with quality commercial construction, whether contemporary or historic.

• **Lighting**

Indirect lighting is recommended for signs. Indirect lighting consists of inconspicuous exterior mounted lights which are positioned to shine on the sign and the surrounding facade. This type of lighting emphasizes the continuity of the building surface, and signs become an integral part of the facade. Indirect lighting fixtures should be shielded to prevent glare on the street and sidewalk. Small back-lit signs may be acceptable when only the letters themselves - not the background - are lighted.

*Use indirect lights to feature entire storefront.*

This inappropriate plastic back-lit sign overpowers the facade and the entire block.
• Light colored letters on dark colored background are more readable than the reverse.

• Signage should be compatible in color and material with your facade and the street as a whole.

• Garish color, oversized, back-lit and crowded signs compete with each other and produce confusion, making it harder to see individual businesses. Compatibility of sign colors and facade colors results in a more memorable impression of the whole block. Said another way, the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts.

• When using neon signage, small simple graphics and symbols are acceptable whereas large neon sings are discouraged.

There are older neon signs from previous eras which have become community landmarks and they should be preserved.
EXTERIOR MATERIALS AND MAINTENANCE

BRICK

Brick is the most common material found in the Downtown area; however, for residential use, it was not widely used in Dixon.

- If original bricks must be replaced, select ones of the same size, color and texture as the original brick. Try to find used brick if possible. If an identical match cannot be found for front facade repairs, consider using bricks from the rear of the structure. When installing replacement brick, maintain the same bonding pattern, joint width and joint profile as the original brickwork.

- Sandblasting should not be used on masonry facades. Strong chemical cleaners should only be used with caution and professional guidance after performing a test on the masonry to be cleaned. Sandblasting, once thought to be a good cleaning method, is now known to destroy the weather-protective glaze on brick, so that erosion, spalling, and other deterioration of the brick accelerates. Sandblasting and harsh chemicals roughen the surface of the brick, making it more susceptible to trapped dirt and moisture that cause deterioration.

- Masonry buildings that have not been painted need only a simple cleaning. Always try the gentlest products and methods first, and perform a test on the masonry to be cleaned.

A gentle scrubbing with plain soap and water is often sufficient. Water under low pressure is usually the next best and cheapest method. More extreme methods, such as the use of harsh chemicals and the use of steam and water at high pressure, should be used only under the direction of a professional who has extensive, successful experience with these applications to older buildings. To determine the best method, first have the contractor make a test on an inconspicuous portion of the masonry to be cleaned. If that proves sufficient, it is usually best for the brick and the least expensive solution.

- When repointing the brick, the new mortar joint should match the original one in size, color and profile or the historic appearance of the structure can be permanently destroyed.

Prior to repointing, the cause of the mortar joint deterioration should be identified and corrected. Deteriorated mortar joints should be tuck-pointed by first removing the loose mortar with hand tools to a minimum depth of ½”. Power tools such as grinders or power chisels should not be used as these tools may cause damage to the bricks. The new mortar should match the original in color, texture and profile to insure the historic appearance.
Deteriorated mortar joints require tuckpointing.

Remove existing mortar with hand tools to a depth of one half inch to one inch.

Fill joints with new high lime content mortar to match existing color and profile.

Masonry Pattern and Unit Size is Different Than Original.

New Brickwork is Different Color Than Original.

Repointed Mortar Joints Do Not Match Original Color.
• Mortar with a high lime content is best for historic structures, not Portland Cement.

Mortar with a high lime content is durable, yet soft and flexible and produces a compatible volume change in varying climatic conditions. It is also slightly soluble in water and is able to self-seal any small cracks that may occur. The Portland Cement commonly used today is not an appropriate mortar for historic structures. The use of rigid, modern mortar, such as Portland Cement, with the softer and more flexible older mortar and bricks, will cause conflicting patterns of stress within the wall, resulting in cracks in the brick and uneven setting.

• Masonry surfaces which have not been previously painted should not be painted or coated with impervious waterproof coatings.

Such coatings trap moisture within the wall and trap salts within the masonry at the face of the bricks, causing spalling of the surface. Latex coatings are preferred.

• Where brick has been painted, it is usually best to leave it that way and simply repaint the latex paint.

Latex paint is generally the preferred choice for masonry and two coats are usually sufficient.

• Breathable, water repellent coatings may become necessary when brick has been previously damaged by sandblasting or other damaging cleaning methods.

Again, professional guidance should be sought prior to applying any type of coating to masonry surfaces.

CAST IRON STOREFRONTS

Cast iron storefronts were readily available from catalogs at the turn of the century and examples can still be seen in Dixon. Local examples are Cast iron storefronts revolutionized storefront construction. Because of their slender, but high weight carrying capacity, they eliminated the need for massive masonry piers. This in turn allowed larger expanses of display window glass. Cast iron components were manufactured with extensive decorative detail.

• To refinish cast iron, use a wire brush to remove loose paint and rust, then repaint with a rust inhibiting primer and paint formulated for exterior metal.

GLASS VENEER AND GLAZED TERRA COTTA

• An expert should be consulted prior to attempting any repair work on Carrara glass (Vitrolite) and glazed terra cotta.

Other specialty materials used in storefront construction include structural glass veneer, sometimes known by the trade names Vitrolite or Carrara glass,
and glazed terra cotta. Carrara glass was available in many colors, but black and white were the most commonly used colors.

Glazed terra cotta was mostly used for trim or decorative work in Dixon, not for structural purposes.

WOOD CLAPBOARD

The most frequently used residential siding material in Dixon is wooden clapboard or weather board, which consists of horizontal boards that overlap by approximately one inch. The lower edge is often thicker than the top. The most common visible widths range from 3” to 5”. Wood is a natural insulating material which, when kept properly scraped, caulked and painted, can last indefinitely. Cedar, redwood, cypress and poplar are the most long-lasting of wood sidings.

WOOD SHINGLES

Wooden shingles, while not a common siding material found in Dixon, are sometimes found combined with wooden clapboards on Queen Anne Style houses. The most common shingle pattern found locally is the “fishscale” pattern found on the home at . Wooden shingles are extremely flexible and can be cut in a wide variety of patterns. Like wooden clapboard, shingles must be properly maintained to prevent them from rotting.

If individual shingles must be replaced, be sure the new ones are matched in size and shape to the originals.

WOOD MAINTENANCE AND PAINTING

- Painting or staining of wood siding and trim is necessary for weatherproofing the wood and protecting interior construction.

Scraping, priming, caulking and painting of wood are necessary maintenance functions. Wood surfaces should be scraped to remove loose paint then thoroughly washed to remove dirt and paint flakes. The next step is priming of all raw wood. The repriming of all previously painted areas is recommended to insure better paint adhesion. After priming, caulk all joints where one architectural component meets another such as around windows, doors and where siding meets trim. Caulk is applied after priming so that the adhesive in the caulk are not absorbed into the wood. Paint is then applied over the caulked and primed areas. If properly done with good materials, a paint job should last 5 to 10 years. Spot touch-up is often needed yearly on the west and south facades, which have the greatest exposure to the sun. Excessive paint peeling may indicate a moisture problem. In this case, possible leaks in the roof or wall should be investigated.

- When installing replacement wood components, prime both sides of the wood before installing.
Priming both sides of new trim and siding will prevent the wood from changing shape due to moisture absorption on the back side.

- **Epoxy products can be used to replace small sections of deteriorated wood.**

Epoxy products can be used to replace relatively small sections of deteriorated wood, such as the bottom of porch posts, railings and window sills. Such epoxies, once dry, can be tooled and sanded to the shape of the original wood component, then primed, caulked and painted. This method will provide a more permanent repair in water-prone areas.

- **Mildew can be controlled or eliminated with proper cleaning and paint additives.**

Mildew can be easily removed by cleaning with one cup of nonammoniated detergent, and one quart of household bleach to one gallon of water. The surface should be scrubbed with a medium soft brush, rinsed with a low pressure water wash and left to dry thoroughly.

When repainting, the use of paint additives will control mildew. Mildew additives can be purchased at any paint or hardware store, or the paint dealer can add and mix it to the paint when purchased. To prevent the reoccurrence of mildew, an alteration of the environment conditions which caused the mildew in the first place can be undertaken, such as by thinning vegetation to allow more light and air to reach the subject surface.

**STUCCO**

Historically, stucco was not commonly used in Dixon. It is generally recommended that stucco coverings over brick not be removed unless the underlying bricks are of a uniformly high quality and were originally intended to be exposed. Removing stucco from brick will expose a permanently damaged brick surface which is the result of applying stucco to brick.

- **When original stucco must be patched or replaced, Portland cement stuccos should be avoided.**

The same precautions applicable to repainting or rebuilding brick walls are applicable to stucco.

Because stucco derives its characteristic texture from the type of sand and other additives used, it is important to try to reproduce this texture when making repairs. Lab testing of the chemical composition (sand/cement mix ratio) should be made to match adjacent existing stucco. Portland cement stuccos should be avoided. Experimentation with different mixtures and testing of a small area before proceeding with the entire job is recommended.

**EIFS**

In some circumstances the relatively new material known as EIFS - Exterior Insulating Finishing System (Dryvit is a common brand name) can be used in small quantities as a replacement or patch material for stucco or plastered surfaces such as an upper cornice. However, EIFS is an appropriate surfacing for large areas of an historic facade.
SYNTETIC SIDING

- Substitute and synthetic sidings such as vinyl siding, aluminum siding, and imitation brick are stone sidings are not appropriate for use on historic structures, and may damage the structure. Aluminum and vinyl siding in narrow widths are generally considered appropriate for new structures within historic areas.

While the vinyl siding industry has made great improvements in its product over the years, its use as a rehabilitation material over original materials is historically inappropriate and may damage the structure.

Inappropriate installation of a substitute siding can cause severe damage to a house originally constructed with weatherboard or shingles. Rot and insect attack can occur and continue unnoticed.
beneath the new siding. Even if the wood is sound, the airtight siding may interfere with moisture evaporation, causing the wood to begin to rot and the siding eventually to buckle. The installation of substitute siding can also detract from a dwelling’s resale value as real estate appraisers and potential buyers are sometimes suspicious that the synthetic siding is hiding structural problems.

• **Synthetic sidings are inappropriate to historic structures.** However, if vinyl or aluminum sidings must be used, it should match the original in width, gauge, profile and texture.

There are various styles of vinyl and aluminum siding available; however, siding with a fake wood grain should be avoided.

• **Synthetic sidings are inappropriate to historic structures.** However, if vinyl or aluminum siding must be used, the historic corner boards, window trim, door trim, or other decorative boards or details should be maintained and not covered over.

To maintain historical proportions, it is absolutely necessary to retain the wider widths of window and door trim and other wider trims such as corner boards and frieze boards. These trims can be covered in flat-finish trim vinyl’s made for this purpose; however, they should maintain their historic widths.