

City Center Design Standards

Bellingham, Washington



August 2002

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Historic Photographs

All historic photographs are courtesy of the Whatcom Museum of History and Art, Bellingham, Washington.

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Introduction

This document presents design standards for the City Center in Bellingham, Washington. They reflect the City's goals to promote economic development, enhance the image of the downtown and reuse historic resources. The standards neither dictate taste nor assure good design. Rather, they support the traditional qualities of the City Center and provide a framework for sympathetic design.

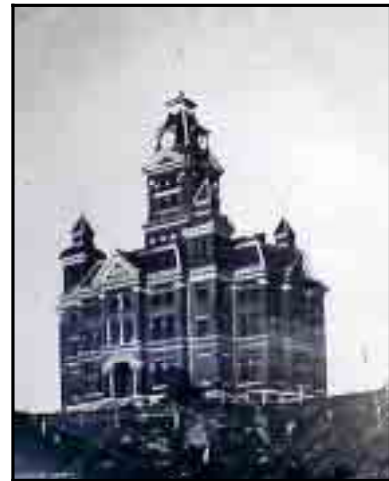
Why have Design Standards?

The design standards provide a basis for making decisions about the appropriate treatment of existing buildings, including historic resources, the design of compatible new construction and the preservation of Bellingham's broader historic landscape. They also serve as educational and planning tools for property owners and their design professionals who seek to make improvements that may affect the character of downtown.

While the design standards are written such that they can be used by the layman to plan improvements, property owners are strongly encouraged to enlist the assistance of qualified design and planning professionals, including architects and historic preservation consultants.

In recent planning processes such as the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan, the Downtown Development Workshops and the City Center Master Plan, citizens and property owners identified a need for design standards and a design review process to accomplish the following objectives:

1. Provide a basis for making decisions about the appropriate treatment of existing buildings, including historic resources, and the design of compatible new construction.
1. Serve as educational and planning tools for property owners and their design professionals, to increase awareness of what constitutes good design and assist the applicant in achieving these objectives.
1. Protect the investment of current property owners by encouraging new construction that represents good design and respect for the scale of existing areas.
1. Improve the living environment and design characteristics of downtown housing.
1. Encourage creativity in site planning and architecture.



Bellingham's City Hall was constructed in 1892, and it housed city offices until 1939.



After decommissioning the City Hall in 1939, the building was converted to the Whatcom Museum of History and Art.



The Bellingham National Bank Building was constructed in 1912 (101-111 East Holly).



Many structures retain historic features that contribute to the interest of downtown. The Bellingham National Bank Building is an example.

Why Preserve Historic Resources?

Historic resources make up a key part of the City Center’s character and represent tangible links to the past. The historic buildings that exist in the City Center are assets that attract tourists, shoppers, businesses and residents. This can foster rehabilitation of buildings and support renewed economic activity.

The City of Bellingham has adopted policies related to the preservation of historic resources and the potential benefit of having design guidelines and a design review process. Goal 13, from the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan is one example:

“Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures, that have historical or archaeological significance.”

The *Visions for Bellingham* process also resulted in the adoption of goals that relate to the preservation of historic resources in Bellingham:

“A large number of historic structures remain, providing a sense of place and history for existing and future citizens. Incentives assist in retaining and restoring historic structures and encouraging new development, which is complementary in terms of architectural style and scale. These incentives may include property tax breaks, zoning and building code flexibility for adaptive uses, and density or other bonuses that encourage good design.”

The values associated with the preservation of historic resources include:

- Providing a link with the past
- Establishing a distinct market image
- Quickly making a building available for occupancy
- Providing an attractive image
- Supporting heritage tourism strategies
- Reinforcing the City Center’s ambiance and civic pride

More information regarding the preservation of historic resources in the City Center may be obtained by reviewing “Chapter 4: Landmarks and Historic Resources,” in the *City Center Master Plan*.

Character Areas

The City Center is a collection of smaller “neighborhoods,” each of which has distinct features that reflect historical land uses, topography and geographic location. For example, the Old Town area was shaped by the economics of the Port of Bellingham, while the Commercial Core Area has a long-standing tradition of general retail. Railroad Avenue has a unique identity as well, which in part derives from the very wide street that results from the existence of a rail line earlier in the city’s history.

As identified in the *City Center Master Plan*, the City Center is divided into five separate Character Areas. Within each of these Character Areas, differences in development appear in the scale and character of buildings and their orientations on their sites. In other cases, the width and orientation of the streets themselves vary.

Each of these Character Areas exhibits physical characteristics that can provide interest to the City Center. (A description of those unique features are included in the *City Center Master Plan*. See the map of Character Area boundaries on page 3-3 of the Plan.) New construction should build on the individual design elements unique to the Character Area in which it is to be built. For example, buildings in Old Town tend to be simpler in character than those found in the Core Area. The City Center should develop as a single, coherent neighborhood while also building on the distinct features of the Character Areas that reflect different traditions of use and setting.



The BPOE Building (1912) at 1414 Cornwall Avenue is seen decorated for a fraternal club gathering.



Although partially obscured by street trees, the BPOE Building is still a contributing part of the City Center streetscape.

An indication of the success of historic preservation is that the number of designated districts across the country has increased, due to local support, such that an estimated 1,000,000 properties, both as individual landmarks and in historic districts, are under local jurisdictions.

Intent of the Design Standards and Review Process

Design standards are approval criteria that must be met as part of design review and historic design review. They inform the developers and the community as to what issues will be addressed during the design review process. The standards include broader concepts than typical development standards in order to provide flexibility to designers. Applicants are responsible for explaining, in their application, how their design meets each applicable standard.

The design review process is flexible. It is intended to encourage designs that are innovative and appropriate for their locations. For this reason design standards are qualitative statements. Unlike some objective design criteria, there are typically many acceptable ways to meet each design standard. It is not the City's intent to prescribe any specific design solution through the design standards.

During the design review process, the review body must find that the proposal meets each of the applicable design standards. Proposals that meet **all** applicable standards will be approved, proposals that do not meet **all** of the applicable standards will not be approved.

How this Handbook is Organized

The standards are organized in a series of five chapters, each of which addresses a specific category of improvements:

Chapter 1: Alterations & New Construction

This applies to design of new buildings as well as alterations to existing buildings that do not have historic significance, or have not yet had an evaluation of significance completed.

Chapter 2: Building Rehabilitation

This chapter applies to buildings of historic significance. It provides principles for rehabilitation that are based on nationally accepted standards for preservation that are adapted to the Bellingham City Center context.

Chapter 3: Parking Facilities

This chapter addresses specific design issues related to parking lots and structures.

Chapter 4: All Projects

This includes a collection of miscellaneous design issues that may occur in a variety of projects. For example, treatment of utilities and mechanical equipment is addressed in this section.

How to Use this Handbook

Note: These provisions are in addition to the regulations contained in the Land Use Development Ordinance. Where the provisions of this handbook conflict with provisions in the Land Use Development Ordinance or the Neighborhood Plan, the regulations of the Land Use Development Ordinance and Neighborhood Plan shall apply.

Each design standard contains the following components:

Design topic

Within each chapter, the information is divided into pertinent design topics. For example, in the chapter addressing *Alterations and New Construction*, the design topic, “**Site Plan**” is among those discussed. This organization allows the user to quickly select the specific design topics within a chapter that are relevant.

Design standards

The specific design standards are presented as **bold face** statements under each design topic. These are also numbered to indicate their relative position within the chapter and to aid in specific reference in the review process. Using the example from above, the *Alterations and New Construction* design topic contains the following design standard “**Maintain the alignment of buildings at the sidewalk edge**”.

Each project shall be required to comply with the applicable design standards listed under each design topic. Each design standard indicates the preferred conditions, but the City’s Planning Department Director (or the Landmark/Design Review Board (LDRB) if applicable) may consider other equal or better design solutions if these solutions meet the intent of the standard.

While alternative solutions can be proposed, none of the criteria in the design standard statements can be disregarded unless the Director (or the LDRB if applicable) determines that a particular standard is not applicable to a specific project. If conflicts arise between two or more standards applied to a specific site, the Director (or the LDRB) may determine an appropriate level of compliance for each based on their relative priority at that location.

If the design standards have been insufficiently addressed, the Director (or the LDRB) may provide direction to assist the applicant in alterations to the design that would be consistent with the standard and if possible, with the applicant's objectives.

Supplementary information

Also provided with the design standards are supplementary requirements, which clarify the primary design standard statement and may suggest specific methods for complying with it. This may include additional design requirements or may provide an expanded explanation. These statements are listed as bullets.

Illustrations

Photographs and sketches may also be provided to clarify the intent of a design standard or its supplementary information.

A sample design standard

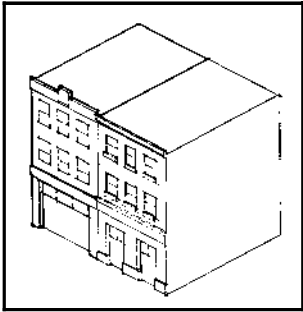
A typical design standard in this document contains three components:

- The design standard itself. This sets forth a basic principle for treatment of a selected design topic.
- Supplementary requirements, listed under the standard. These clarify the primary design standard statement and may suggest specific methods for complying with it.
- An illustration, in the form of a sketch or photograph that depicts a method of complying with the standard.

Additions to Historic Buildings

29. An addition may be made to the rear or side of a building if it does the following:

- An addition should maintain the alignment of storefront elements, moldings, cornices and upper story windows—as seen on the existing building and its surrounding context.



A new addition has been placed to the side.

Basic Principles of Design in Bellingham's City Center:

1. Maintain a clear definition of the street edge.

Traditionally, the edge of the sidewalk was clearly defined as a "street wall," which helps define the street as an urban space. This feature should be maintained.

2. Enhance the street level as an inviting place for pedestrians.

Providing features that are visually interesting and that are in human scale are essential. These may include storefront windows, display cases, art and landscaping.

3. Relate to traditional buildings in the area.

Traditional buildings combine to establish a sense of continuity in the area, while also accommodating variety in design and detail. As properties are improved, they should enhance the overall image of the area as a place to do business. Each building can help contribute to this visual continuity of the City Center while also meeting individual owners' needs.

4. If the building is an historic structure, respect its period of significance.

Preservation of Bellingham's heritage is important to its sense of community and its economic development. Many of the structures in the City Center have historic value, even some that have experienced alterations. It is important to consider the significance of their basic forms, materials and details when planning improvements. Consultation with an historic preservation specialist to determine the period of significance of a building is recommended before improvements are planned.

Additional key principles for the design of commercial buildings

Many buildings in the City Center are retail-oriented. For them, these basic principles also apply:

Use a simple, unified design whenever possible.

An individual building should have a simple, **unified design** that serves as a frame for the windows that display goods or reveal services offered inside. If the design and its colors are too “wild,” they will detract from merchandising, and if they are too plain, they will not draw enough attention.

Use the entire building front as your image.

Coordinate upper and lower floors into a single design concept, even if the upper floors are not a part of the ground floor business. This can serve the “attention-getting” function and can be much more effective than a large sign.

Develop a clear presentation to the street.

A single, clear design concept that avoids clutter and directs the customer’s eye where you want it is important. Your design scheme should easily lead the viewer’s attention to displays of goods, views of activities inside and ultimately to the business entrance. Use only a few colors throughout and keep signs to a minimum. Place them where they will lead a customer to products or activities.

These design principles underlie the specific guidelines that appear in the chapters that follow.

Develop with sustainability and environment in mind.

Today the impacts of some patterns of land development are recognized to cause undue harm to the environment and our shared quality of life. The rapidly growing field of “green building” seeks to reverse this trend by using a new approach to building that saves energy, conserves resources and is less polluting. The US Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)[™] program is a resource for project sustainability. (www.leedbuilding.org).

Applicability

Development requiring design review under Bellingham Municipal Code Section 20.25 shall comply with the provisions of this handbook. Generally, the design standards apply to all new construction, exterior remodels and signs in Bellingham's City Center area as defined in the City Center Master Plan and as shown on the Design Standards Zone Map.

Review Process

Note that the following description of the review process reflects the Council direction to have a process that includes staff review for minor projects and a public meeting and review by a design review board for projects that raise significant planning issues. This section is a placeholder for the review process. Land Use Code changes are required to establish the process. This section will contain more details once the process has been thoroughly defined and code changes are completed.

The design review process is contained in BMC 20.25. Generally, the steps are:

- **Recommended pre-application conference with staff**
- **Pre-application neighborhood meeting**
- **Application submittal and public notice**
- **Optional Landmark/Design Review Board (LDRB) public meeting**
- **Review and decision**
- **Appeal**

PLACEHOLDER FOR 11 X 17
DESIGN STANDARDS ZONE MAP

1. Alterations & New Construction

These design principles apply to all new construction projects and to the renovation of buildings determined not to have historical significance in the City Center. This includes the development of residential, office, institutional, cultural, retail and/or wholesale uses. The design of a new building should not necessarily imitate historic buildings, but should be compatible with them. Creativity in design is especially encouraged when it also is compatible with the design goals of the downtown.

The City Center conveys a sense of a time and place, which is expressed through its numerous historic buildings. This character should be maintained. Therefore, the design of new construction should be carefully considered within this context. First, it is important to realize that, while the City Center has historic character, it also remains dynamic, with alterations to existing structures and construction of new buildings occurring over time.

When new building does occur, it should be in a manner that reinforces the basic character-defining features of the area. Such features include the way in which a building is located on its site, the manner in which it faces the street, its materials and the general alignment of architectural elements and details along a block. When these design variables are arranged in a new building to be similar to those seen traditionally in the area, visual compatibility results.

Architectural Character

While it is important that new buildings and alterations be compatible with the historic context, it is not necessary that they imitate older building styles. In fact, stylistically distinguishing new buildings from their older neighbors in the City Center is preferred, when the overall design reinforces traditional development patterns.

1. New interpretations of traditional building styles are encouraged.

- A new design that draws upon the fundamental similarities among historic buildings without copying them is preferred. This will allow them to be seen as products of their own time yet be compatible with their historic neighbors.
- The literal imitation of older historic styles is discouraged.
- In essence, infill should be a balance of new and old in design.



New interpretations of traditional building styles are encouraged.



Contemporary detailing helps distinguish new from old.



Architectural concrete block combined with brick provides a texture similar to traditional masonry in a contemporary design.



Contemporary interpretations of traditional buildings, which are similar in scale and overall character to those seen historically, are strongly encouraged.



This contemporary interpretation of a storefront (left) includes a recessed entry and transom element.



This single infill development incorporates different storefront design elements within each façade module—not only breaking up the overall mass, but adding visual interest along the street as well.



Traditional storefront features—such as a kickplate, display window, transom and recessed entry—are reinterpreted in this new storefront design.



Maintain the alignment of uniformly setback facades.

Site Plan

Most structures in the City Center contribute to a strong “building wall” edge to the street because they align at the front lot line and are usually built out to the full width of the parcel, to the side lot lines. Although small gaps do occur between some structures, these are the exception. These characteristics should be preserved.

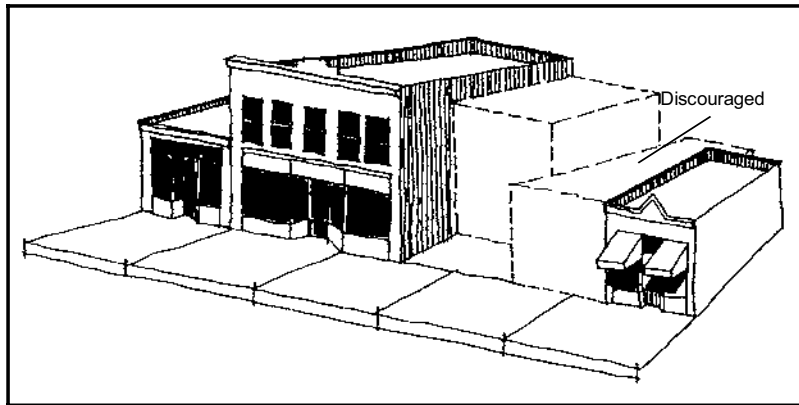
Sidewalks are designed to facilitate pedestrian movement and activity. There are three distinct zones with a sidewalk: the curb zone, the movement zone and the storefront or activity zone. The encouragement of street level activity such as dining, displays, seating is encouraged. Street elements like trees, parking meters, bike racks, signs should be located in the curb zone. Street elements or furniture should ideally be clustered.

Some typical zone depths are:

- Bench for sitting 4 ft width
- Vendor Typically under 6 ft.
- Outdoor dining 6 ft. min. (one table)
- Outdoor displays Typically under 6 ft.
- Movement Zone 3 ft. minimum
- Storefront Activity Zone 3 ft. minimum
- Curb Zone Typically 4 ft.



Locate the front building wall at the sidewalk line when feasible.



Align the building front at the sidewalk edge.



Photo left, before: The street wall is broken with a vacant lot. Photo right, after: A new building maintains alignment at the sidewalk edge.

2. Maintain the alignment of buildings at the sidewalk edge.

- Locate the front building wall at the sidewalk line when feasible.
- Where a building must be set back from the sidewalk, use landscape elements to define the sidewalk edge.

3. Orient a primary entrance toward the street.

- Buildings should have a clearly defined primary entrance. For most commercial buildings, this should be a recessed entryway.
- Secondary public entrances to commercial spaces are also encouraged on larger buildings.

4. Provide safe, comfortable places where people can stop, view, socialize and rest. Ensure that these places do not conflict with other sidewalk uses.

Mass, Scale and Form

Building heights vary in the City Center and yet there is a strong sense of similarity in scale. This is in part because most buildings are within two- to four-stories in height. In addition, most buildings have features at the lower levels that are similar in scale. First floors, for example, are similar in height. Other lower floors are also defined by moldings that align along the block, which contributes to a perceived uniformity in height to pedestrians. A variety in building heights, as seen through new construction, is therefore appropriate. However, the dominant scale of two- to four-stories should be maintained. This may be accomplished by literally constructing a building within this traditional height range; in other cases, design elements that reflect this traditional height may be incorporated into larger structures.



New construction should appear similar in mass and scale to structures found historically in the area. For example, in Old Town, the height is typically one- and two-stories. Whereas in the downtown core, heights vary more widely.

5. A new building should maintain the alignment of horizontal elements along the block.

- Window sills, moldings and mid-belt cornices are among those elements that should be aligned.

6. Floor-to-floor heights should appear to be similar to those seen historically.

- In particular, the windows in new construction should appear similar in height to those seen traditionally.

7. Buildings should appear similar in width to those seen historically.

- Historically, most buildings were constructed in similar increments. New buildings should reflect this pattern.

8. Reinforce the established building scale of two to four stories in height.

- Develop a primary facade that is in scale and maintains alignments with surrounding historic buildings.
- If a building must be taller, consider stepping upper stories back from the main facade, or design the lower levels to maintain the alignment of elements seen traditionally in the block.
- Also consider stepping the mass of a tall building down to a lower height as it approaches surrounding historic buildings.



The scale of window and storefront openings on this large infill development helps it relate to the surrounding historic context.



Although this building is massive, it is still in scale with its surrounding smaller neighbors because it utilized building elements which are similar in scale (i.e. the window and storefront openings).



Historically, buildings were built in standard increments. New buildings should reflect this pattern.

9. Where appropriate Consider dividing larger buildings into “modules” that are similar in scale to buildings seen historically.

- If a larger building is divided into “modules,” these should be expressed three-dimensionally, throughout the building.
- When considering a tall structure, the alignment of building elements is particularly important. Although a new building may tower above the surrounding buildings, the first several stories should visually relate to the surrounding historic context.



This new infill building is divided into smaller modules in order to relate to the historic buildings across the street.



A part of this contemporary infill building (above) is a parking structure which is set back from the front and sides of the retail wrap. The openings in the parking section of the development also utilize “window proportions” similar to those seen historically.



Materials should appear similar to those used historically. Traditional materials are preferred, primarily stone and brick.



This building is constructed of traditional building materials, yet its contemporary interpretation of a traditional storefront allows it to be seen as a new addition to the street.

Exterior Building Materials

Traditionally, a limited palette of building materials was used in the City Center—primarily brick and stone. This same selection of materials should be continued. New materials also may be considered when they relate to those used historically in scale, texture, matte finish and detailing.

10. Materials should appear similar to those used historically.

- Masonry was the traditional material, and is preferred for new construction. This includes stone and brick.
- Wood and metal were used for window, door and storefront surrounds, and should be continued in new construction.
- New materials will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If used, they should appear similar in character to those used historically. For example, stucco, cast stone or concrete should be detailed to provide a human scale.
- New materials also should have a demonstrated durability in the Bellingham climate.

11. Simple material finishes are encouraged for large expanses of wall plane.

- Matte, or non-reflective, finishes are preferred. Polished stone and mirrored glass, for example, should be avoided as primary materials.



New materials should appear similar in character to those used historically. For example, stucco should be detailed to provide a human scale.

Upper Story Windows

A pattern exists along the street with the repetition of evenly spaced, similarly sized upper story windows. These also give a building a sense of human scale—even for high rise towers. Using window sizes and proportions that are familiar to the pedestrian helps them to relate to the overall size of a building. The alignment and scale of these windows are part of a common way of building that should be maintained.

12. Upper story windows with vertical emphasis are encouraged.

- Typically, upper story windows are twice as tall as they were wide. These proportions are within a limited range; therefore, upper story windows in new construction, should relate to the window proportions seen historically.

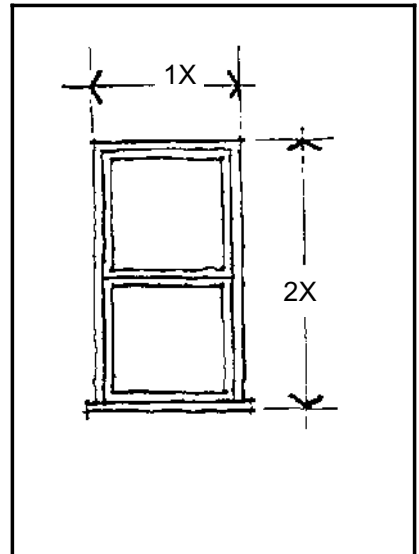
13. Windows should align with others in a block.

- Windows, lintels and their trim elements should align with those on adjacent historic buildings.

14. Develop visual and physical connections into buildings' active interior spaces from adjacent sidewalks.



Upper story windows with vertical



Typically, upper story windows are twice as tall as they are wide. This tradition should be continued.



The window sills, moldings, and comices all align on these contemporary infill buildings.



This contemporary storefront clearly identifies the primary entrance.



Clearly define the primary entrance facing the street.

Entries

The repetition of recessed entries provides a rhythm of shadows along the street, which helps establish a sense of scale and invites pedestrians in. This trend should be continued in new construction.

14. Building entrances should appear similar to those used historically.

- Clearly define the primary entrance.
- Contemporary interpretations of building entries, which are similar in scale and overall character to those seen historically, are encouraged.

15. Locate the primary entrance facing the street.

- Building entrances should be recessed.
- Primary building entrances should be at street level. A sunken terrace entrance is not appropriate as the primary access from the street.
 - ◆ Entrances should connect the interior of the building to the street.
 - ◆ If entrances are recessed from the outermost building façade, they need to be clearly marked and identified with elements such as lighting, trellises, canopies, architectural elements and signage..
 - ◆ Street entrances should be more articulated and highlighted than parking lot entrances.
 - ◆ Entrances should provide a transition from the street to interior.



Building entrances should appear similar to those used historically.

Auto-Oriented and Franchise Commercial Buildings

One of the concerns in building design is that when national chain companies construct in the City Center, they should do so in a way that reinforces the design traditions. Some typical issues and negative impacts often associate with commercial franchise design include:

- ◆ Bright logo colors are used over large expanses of a building that contrasts too strongly with the established character of Bellingham.
- ◆ Large blank walls on “big box” buildings are bland and out of scale, and discourage pedestrian activity.
- ◆ Buildings are surrounded by parking lots and cars. Primary entrances are typically oriented to these parking lots, rather than to the street.
- ◆ Metal panels and large areas of featureless stucco are used, which are out of character and not of human scale.

16. Use landscape elements to screen edges of open sites and to break up large parking areas.

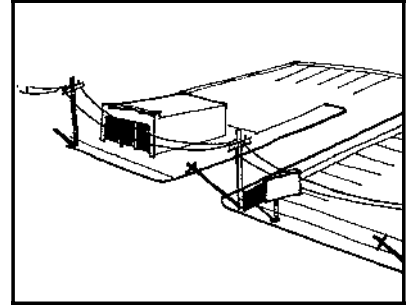
- ◆ Extensive amounts of paving discourages pedestrian activity and weakens the edge distinction between the site and the street.
- ◆ Also define and enhance pedestrian routes with landscaping and accent paving.

17. Avoid multiple curb cuts.

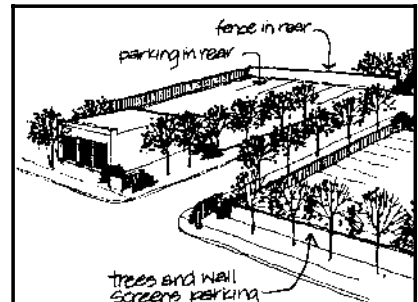
- ◆ These complicate turning movements and disrupt the sidewalk.
- ◆ Minimize curb cuts by combining driveways with adjacent properties.



Use landscape elements to screen edges of open sites and to break up large parking areas.



Extensive amounts of paving surface discourages pedestrian activity and weakens the edge distinction between the site and the street.



Use landscape elements to screen edges of open sites and to break up large parking areas.



When a building cannot be located at the street edge, use landscape elements to define the edge of a site.

18. Locate a new building at the street edge.

- ◆ This is especially true where an existing strip commercial center exists.
- ◆ This will reinforce the traditional development pattern of buildings located at the street edge.
- ◆ This will also screen large areas of parking from the street.



In this view of the same building as in the photo at right, the canopy of the service area and gas pumps can be seen behind the building.



Where a parking facility shares a site with a building, place the parking facility at the rear of the site or beside the building. This store and gas station located on a corner lot has kept the auto-oriented portion of the use to the rear of the site, thereby preserving the building edge at the sidewalk.



Consider incorporating a new building located at the street edge where an existing strip commercial center exists. The building in the foreground is a contemporary infill which has been built at the street edge in front of a "big box" retail store.



In this new franchise development, the street level was designed to provide visual interest to pedestrians. The building was located at the sidewalk edge, not behind a parking lot. Display windows and interesting details were also used to provide interest.



Portions of this infill development included two-story elements with upper story windows that relate the building to the surrounding historic context.



The parking for this franchise commercial building was located to the side and rear of the structure. This allows the building to retain prominence over other, secondary site features.

Industrial Uses

There is less potential for abutting industrial properties to be designed to create a sense of continuity with the surrounding commercial context. Nonetheless, where opportunities do exist for enhancing the edges of properties for pedestrian interest, they should do so.

19. Maintain the pedestrian-oriented streetscape edge.

- ◆ Locate a building at the street edge. This may include administrative offices, separate retail uses or views into manufacturing areas. At a minimum, there should be activity visible from the sidewalk.
- ◆ Using temporary (changeable) product display cases or landscaping may also be appropriate.

20. Locate warehousing, storage facilities or other service areas to the rear of a site.

- ◆ Access should be provided away from other uses.

21. Minimize any negative impacts associated with an industrial use.

- ◆ These can include excessive amounts of noise, light, odors and/or air borne particulates.
- ◆ Screening facilities with landscaping may be an appropriate way to minimize such negative impacts.
- ◆ Note that manufacturing uses located adjacent to residential uses may have to be more heavily screened.

**PLACEHOLDER FOR 8 1/2 X 11 HISTORIC
RESOURCES MAP**

2. Building Rehabilitation

These design standards apply to all properties that are considered historic resources in the City Center, including those on the local, state, and national registers. (These standards are *mandatory* for properties on the local, state, and national registers, and *recommended* for other historic properties). In general, properties must be at least fifty years old to be considered historic at the national level, and must retain features that are expressive of their period of historic significance. In some cases, buildings and structures less than 50 years old may be considered historic resources. At the state and local levels, many more buildings may qualify for historic designation than at the national level. Contact the Bellingham Planning Department (or Office of Neighborhoods and Community Development) if you think your building may have historic significance.

The design standards provide a basis for making decisions about the appropriate treatment of historic resources and compatible new construction. They also serve as an educational and planning tool for property owners and their design professionals who seek to make improvements that may affect historic resources.

While the design standards are written such that they can be used by the layperson to plan improvements, property owners are strongly encouraged to enlist the assistance of qualified design and planning professionals, including architects and preservation consultants.

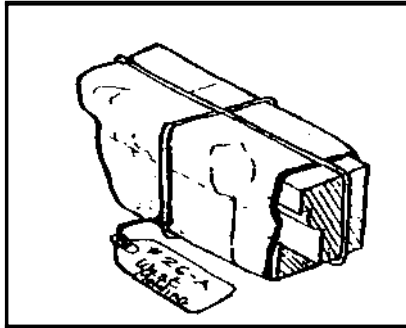
Note that there will be flexibility in the application of building and other codes for historical buildings.

Concern for Preservation of Character-defining Features

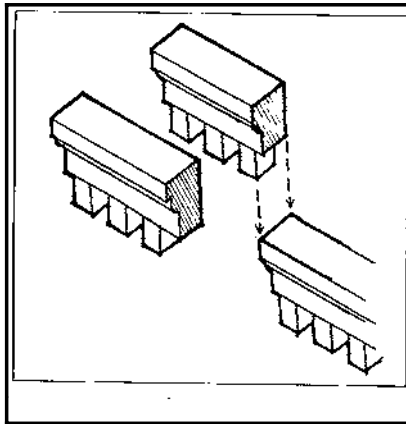
Because the City Center has a wealth of architecture remaining from its early history, the area is filled with character-defining features, which collectively establish a sense of place, a sense of human scale and add rich detail to the buildings. It is also these features, which draw pedestrian activity to the street, making it lively and economically viable. Because of these attributes, it is crucial that the character-defining features be preserved. Typical features include a decorative cornice, vertically oriented upper story windows, and larger first floor openings and original main entrances of buildings.

that remain in good condition. For those that are deteriorated, repair is preferred over replacement. When replacement is necessary, it should be in a manner similar to that seen historically. This philosophy is defined in more detail in the guidelines that follow:

A basic tenet of preservation is to minimize disturbance to the historic building fabric. Therefore, in the treatment of an historic building, it is best to preserve rather than replace those features



When disassembly of historic elements is necessary, carefully identify all pieces that will be stored during your rehabilitation project.



Replace features that are missing or beyond repair.



Replace features that are missing or beyond repair. Reconstruct only those portions that are damaged beyond repair.

Character-Defining Features

Character-defining features collectively establish a sense of place, provide human scale and add rich detail to the street. These character-defining features should be preserved. Typical features include the historic facade material, a decorative cornice, vertically oriented upper story windows, larger first floor openings, and the trim around an opening.

1. Preserve character-defining features that are intact.

- The historic facade material, the trim around an opening and a historic cornice are among the character-defining features to preserve.
- Don't remove or damage character-defining features.
- Preserve intact features with appropriate maintenance techniques.
- *Technical information is available at the City of Bellingham, Office of Neighborhoods and & Community Development and Planning Department.*
- When disassembly of a historic element is necessary, carefully identify how it will be stored during your rehabilitation project. Store them in a safe place until they are re-installed.

2. Repair those features that are damaged.

- Use methods that will not harm the historic materials.
- Repair work is preferred over replacement.



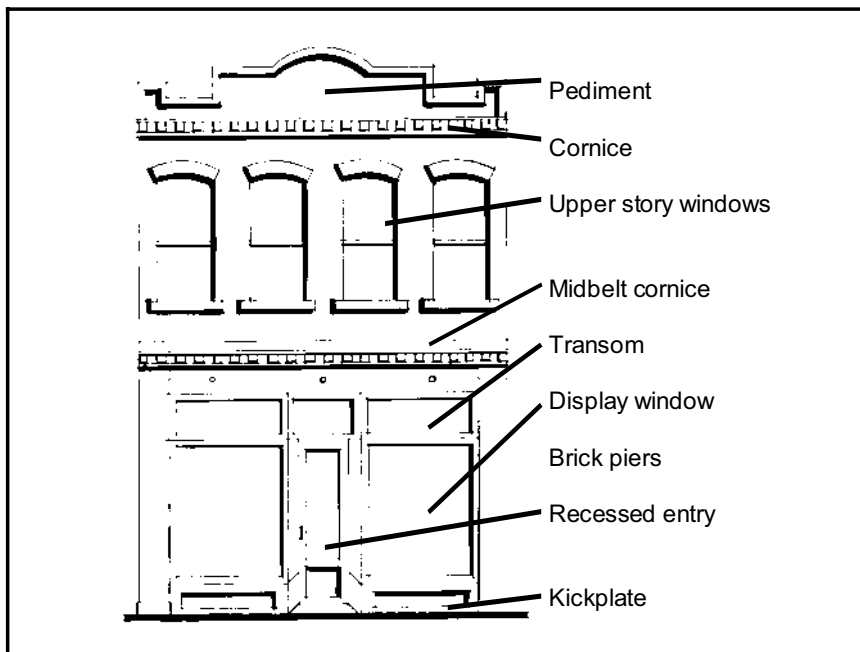
Preserve all character-defining features that are intact. One option is to use a color scheme for the building that highlights architectural features.

3. Replace features that are missing or beyond repair.

- Reconstruct only those portions that are damaged beyond repair.
- Reconstruct the original element, based on adequate evidence, if possible. This is the strongly preferred option.
- If evidence is missing, a simplified interpretation of similar elements may be considered.

4. A rehabilitation project should preserve these character-defining elements:

- **Display windows:** The main portion of glass on the storefront, where goods and services are displayed.
- **Transom or sign band:** The upper portion of the display, separated from the main display window by a frame.
- **Kickplate:** Found beneath the display window. Sometimes called a bulkhead panel.
- Original **Entry:** Usually set back from the sidewalk in a protected recess.
- **Upper story windows:** Windows located on the second story area. These usually have a vertical orientation, and appear to be less transparent as the large expanse of glass in the storefront below.
- **Cornice molding:** A decorative band at the top of the building. A **mid-belt cornice** may sometimes be found separating some floors (e.g., a storefront from the upper story windows).



Typical storefront components

Design of Alterations

Buildings may undergo alterations over time. New alterations often occur when original material is missing and new interpretations of traditional elements become necessary. These new alterations should be planned to preserve the building's integrity.

5. Design an alteration to be compatible with the historic character of the property.

- Avoid alterations that would hinder the ability to interpret the historic significance of the original building.
- Alterations that seek to imply an earlier period than that of the building are inappropriate.

6. Avoid alterations that damage historic features.

- For example, mounting a sign panel in a manner that causes decorative moldings to be damaged would be inappropriate.

This row of buildings had lost some details over time and a monochromatic color scheme obscures the original design character. (Compare with the "after" photograph below.)



After rehabilitation, the row of buildings shown in the earlier photograph above conveys a stronger sense of historic character.





The windows in this building were boarded and architectural details needed repair. (Compare with the photo below).



A modest building can also be renovated to be compatible with the context. In this photograph the original millinery shop front had simple moldings at the top. (Compare with



The building was restored, and a plaza in the foreground was developed to add activity to the streetscape.



Years later, all original detail had been stripped from the building. (Compare with below.)



The same building (above) after renovation, exhibits the more classical features of commercial storefronts, including a painted cornice, kickplate, and recessed entry.



If a storefront is altered, consider restoring it to the original design.



Using historic photographs can help in determining the original character.



Restoring the firehouse (top photo) to its original condition (middle photo) has helped revitalize a once failing downtown.

Storefronts

Many downtown storefronts have components seen traditionally on commercial buildings. The repetition of these standard elements creates a visual unity on the street that should be preserved.

7. Preserve the historic character of a storefront, when it is intact.

- This will help maintain the interest of the street to pedestrians.
- If the storefront glass is intact, it should be preserved.

8. If a storefront is altered, consider restoring it to the original design.

- If evidence of the original design is missing, use a simplified interpretation of similar storefronts. The storefront still should be designed to provide interest to pedestrians, but should not create a false sense of history.



Preserve the historic character of a storefront, when it is intact.

9. An alternative design that is a contemporary interpretation of a traditional storefront is appropriate.

- Where the original is missing and no evidence of its character exists, a new design that uses the traditional elements may be considered.
- However, it must continue to convey the character of typical storefronts, including the transparent character of the display window, recessed entry and cornice, to name a few.
- Altering the size of an historic window opening or blocking it with opaque materials is inappropriate.
- Note that in some cases, an original storefront may have been altered early in the history of the building and taken on significance. It may be appropriate to preserve such changes.
- Greater flexibility in the treatment of a rear facade may be appropriate, if it does not have character-defining features. However, care should be taken to preserve a storefront on those buildings, which have traditional commercial storefronts on more than one facade.



When original features are missing, an alternative design that is a contemporary interpretation of a traditional storefront may be considered. The storefront still should be designed to provide interest to pedestrians.

Windows & Doors

Original windows and doors are important features that help convey the early character of a building. These elements should be preserved, when feasible.

10. Maintain a historically significant storefront opening.

- The size and shape of an original window or door is an important characteristic that contributes to the integrity of an historic commercial building.
- Avoid altering the shape of these features.
- If these elements have already been altered, consider restoring them if their original condition can be determined.

11. Retain the original shape of the transom glass in an historic storefront.

- The upper glass band of a traditional storefront introduced light into the depths of a building. These bands are found on many historic storefronts, and they often align at the same height.
- The shape of the transom is important to the proportion of the storefront, and it should be preserved in its historic configuration, whenever possible.
- If the original glass is missing, installing new glass is preferred. However, if the transom must be blocked out, use it as a sign panel or a decorative band, but be certain to retain the original proportions.



Retain the original shape of the transom glass in an historic storefront. Removing or covering up the transom opening is inappropriate.

12. Preserve historic upper story windows.

- Historically, upper story windows had a vertical emphasis. The proportions of these windows contribute to the character of each commercial storefront.
- Don't block them down or alter their size.
- Consider re-opening windows that are currently blocked.
- Maintain the historic sash as well. Repair sash, rather than replace it, when feasible.
- Preserve the character of divided light pattern of historic windows.



Preserve historic upper story windows.

Entries

The repetition of recessed entries provides a rhythm of shadows along the street, which helps establish a sense of scale and identifies business entrances. This pattern should be maintained.

13. Maintain recessed entries where they are found.

- Restore the historic recessed entry if it has been altered.
- Avoid entries that are flush with the sidewalk.

14. Where entries are not recessed, maintain them in their original position when feasible.

- However, one also may need to comply with other code requirements, including door width, swing and construction.

Kickplates

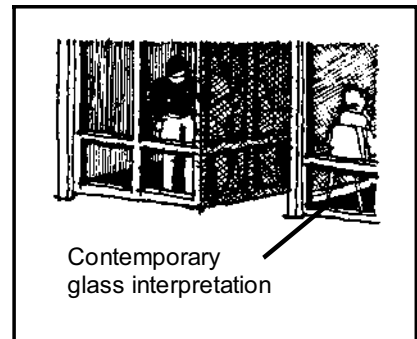
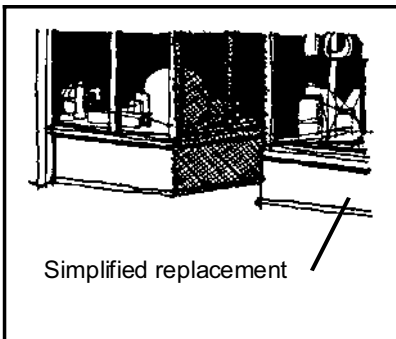
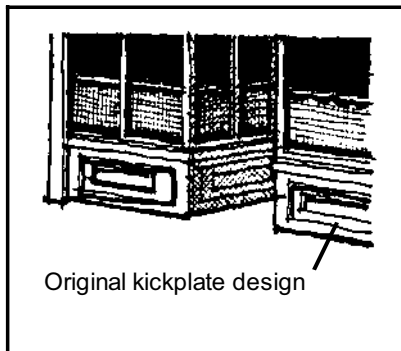
A kickplate, or bulkhead, was a popular feature of most commercial buildings. This feature should be preserved.

15. Retain the kickplate as a decorative panel.

- The kickplate, located below the display window, adds interesting detail to the streetscape and should be preserved.

16. If the original kickplate is missing, develop a sympathetic replacement design.

- Wood and masonry are appropriate materials for replacements.
- Coordinate the color of the kickplate with other trim elements on the building.



Retain the kickplate as a decorative panel. If the original is missing, develop a sympathetic replacement design.

Cornices

Most historic commercial buildings have cornices to cap their facades. Their repetition and general alignment along a street contributes to the visual continuity on a block, and should be preserved.

17. Preserve the character of the cornice line.

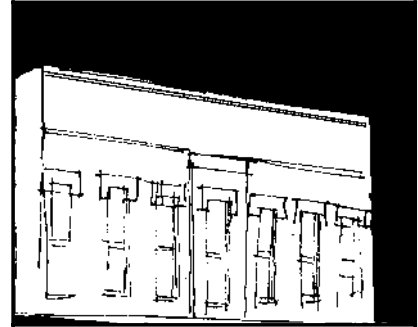
- Most historic commercial buildings have cornices to cap their facades. Their repetition and general alignment along a street contributes to the visual continuity on a block.
- This may be a straight or stepped parapet.

18. Reconstruct a missing cornice when historic evidence is available.

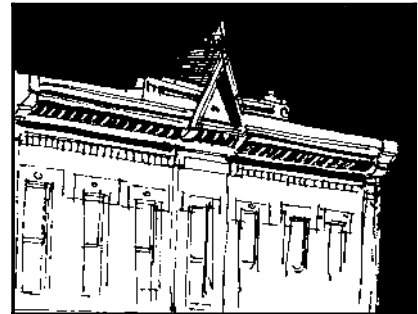
- Use historic photographs to determine design details of an original cornice.
- The substitution of another old cornice for the original may be considered, provided that the substitute is similar to the original and the fact that it is not original is documented.

19. A simplified interpretation also is appropriate if evidence of the original is missing.

- Appropriate materials include stone, brick and stamped metal.



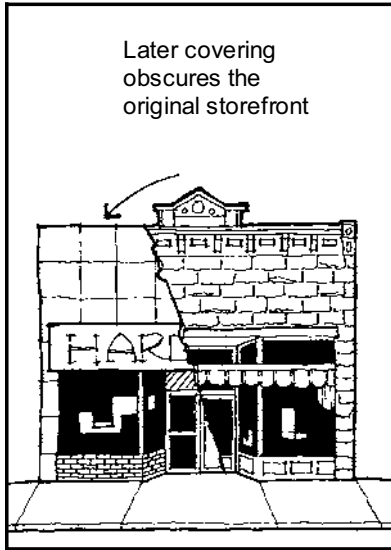
If the cornice is missing from a building, consider reconstructing it.



Reconstruct a missing cornice when historic evidence is available.



A simplified interpretation also is appropriate if evidence of the original is missing.



Don't cover or obscure original facade materials. If the original material has been covered, uncover if feasible.



Protect masonry from water deterioration.

Facade Materials

Original exterior building materials provide a sense of scale and texture and convey the work of skilled craftsmen. These original building materials should not be covered, damaged or removed unless other work being done is sensitive to the original character.

20. Historic building materials and craftsmanship add textural qualities, as well as visual continuity and character to the streetscape, and should be preserved.

- Brick, stone and wood have been the dominant building materials.

21. Don't cover or obscure original facade materials.

- Covering of original facades not only conceals interesting detail, but also interrupts the visual continuity along the street.
- If the original material has been covered, expose it if feasible.
 - ◆ Do not paint natural colored masonry.
 - ◆ However, if masonry was painted historically, then it may be appropriate to repaint.

22. If material replacement is necessary, use materials similar to those employed historically.

- Masonry, either brick or stone, and wood were the primary wall material for most buildings. Wood and metal were used for window, door and storefront surrounds.
- Substitute materials may be used if they match the original in appearance, finish and profile as closely as is possible.

23. Protect historic material surfaces.

- Don't use harsh cleaning methods that could damage the finish of historic materials.
- *Technical information is available at the City of Bellingham, Office of Neighborhoods and Community Development and Planning Department.*

24. Protect masonry from water deterioration.

- Provide proper drainage so water does not stand on flat surfaces or accumulate in decorative features.
- Provide a means to drain water away from foundations.
- Use a sealant, or clear coat, to protect masonry only when necessary. A sealant will prevent proper breathing and cause moisture to be trapped inside the masonry.

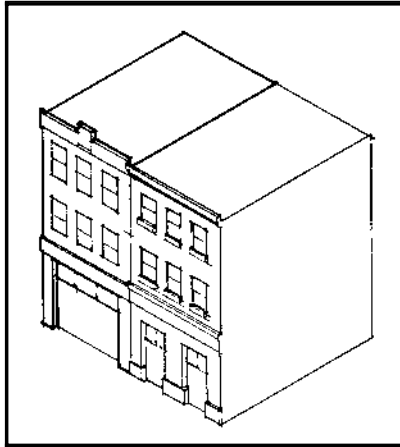
Design of Additions

Many buildings have experienced additions over time, as need for additional space occurred, particularly with a change in use. When planning a new addition to a historic structure, one should minimize the negative effects that may occur. While some destruction of original materials is almost always a part of constructing an addition, such loss should be minimized.

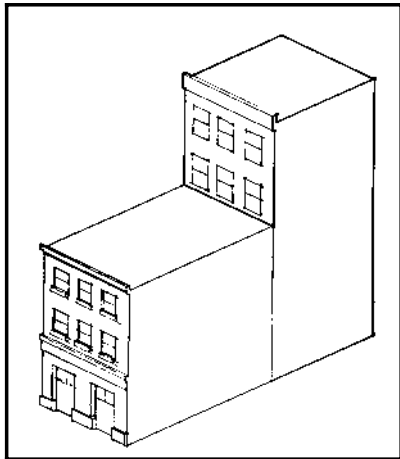
Two distinct types of additions should be considered: First, ground level additions, which involve expanding the footprint of a structure, may be considered. Such additions should be to the rear or side of a building, where it will have the least impact on the historic character of a building. There may only be limited opportunities for addition placement.

Second, an addition to the roof may be designed that is simple in character and set back substantially from the front plane of a building if appropriate. In addition, the materials, window size and alignment of elements on the addition should be similar to that of the existing structure.

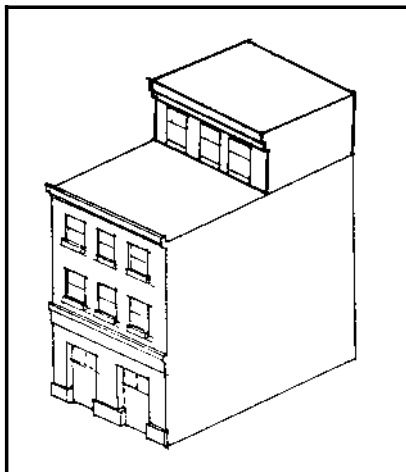
- 25. An addition should be compatible in scale, materials and character with the main building.**
- 26. An addition should not damage or obscure historically or architecturally important features.**
 - For example, loss or alteration of a cornice line should be avoided.
- 27. Design an addition such that the historic character of the original building can still be interpreted.**
 - A new addition that creates an appearance inconsistent with the historic character of the building is inappropriate. For example, an addition that is more ornate than the original building would be out of character.
 - An addition that seeks to imply an earlier period than that of the building is also inappropriate as it creates a false sense of history.



A new addition has been placed to the left side of an original three-story building.



An addition has been placed to the rear of an original three-story building.



Here, a roof addition has been set back from the front.

28. An addition should be subtly distinguishable from the historic building.

- An addition should be made distinguishable from the historic building, even in subtle ways, such that the character of the original can be interpreted.

29. An addition may be made to the rear or side of a building if it does the following:

- An addition should not create a false sense of history and should maintain the alignment of storefront elements, moldings, cornices and upper story windows—as seen on the existing building and its surrounding context.

30. An addition may be made to the roof of a building if it does the following:

- An addition should be set back from a primary, character-defining facade, to preserve the perception of the historic scale of the building.



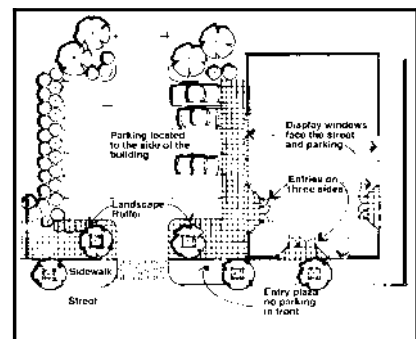
An addition to the side of an existing structure (left) should be compatible in scale and materials, as well as maintaining alignments along the block.

3. Parking Facilities

New parking facilities (includes surface lots and structures) should be designed to be attractive, compatible additions to downtown. Using high quality materials, providing a sense of scale in architectural details, undergrounding of some parking, providing active uses at the sidewalk and street edge and landscaping are some methods that contribute to compatibility. Additional guidance for the development of parking facilities may be found in the *City Center Master Plan*. Minimal standards will not apply to private, off street downtown parking.

Location of Parking Facilities

1. **Locate a parking facility at the interior of a block whenever possible.**
 - This acknowledges the special function of corner properties as they are generally more visible than interior facilities, serve as landmarks and provide a sense of enclosure to an intersection.



Locate a parking facility, particularly surface parking lots, at the interior of a block whenever possible.



This infill project in the foreground in Ogden, UT, respects the scale of traditional buildings found downtown, as well as providing parking located to the rear.



Compare this series of photos with the sketch above, which influenced the development of this building. The corner building has entrances on two street fronts and at the rear.



The parking for this site was located to the rear; thereby, retaining the prominence of the corner property.



Consider the use of fences and walls as screens for the edges of lots.



Where a parking lot abuts a public sidewalk, provide a buffer. This may be a landscaped strip or planter.

2. Where a parking facility shares a site with a building, place the parking at the rear of the site or beside the building.

- In this way, the architectural continuity of the street can be preserved.
- Site a parking lot so it will minimize gaps in the continuous building wall of a block.
- A parking facility located behind a building and ac-



Where a parking lot shares a site with a building, place the parking at the rear of the site or beside the building.

cessed from an alley is the preferred configuration.

3. Minimize disruption to visual continuity of street.

- Widths of entries to parking facilities should be minimized.
- Where parking facilities interrupt the pattern of building facades on the street, the entry creating the break in the façade shall be minimized.

4. Provide well-lit and convenient pedestrian access to all parking facilities.

- Where new or renovated parking facilities interrupt existing patterns of pedestrian circulation, provide safe pedestrian routes through the site.
- Maintain strong emphasis on the pedestrian environment at the sidewalk crossing of parking access points.

Visual Impacts of Surface Parking

To reduce the visual impacts of a large parking facility area, divide it into a number of smaller parking facilities or make it look smaller through the use of landscaping.

5. Where a parking facility abuts a public sidewalk, provide a buffer.

- This may be a landscaped strip or planter.
- Consider the planting of shrubs, vines and small trees of at least four feet in height, which can aid in the circulation of pedestrians and vehicles by demarcating boundaries and aisles and drawing attention to desired openings and paths for pedestrians.
- Also consider the use of fences and walls as screens for the edges of facilities. Materials selected for barriers should be complementary to the character and materials of nearby historic buildings.

6. Integrate a parking facility with adjacent land uses.

- Accomplish this by using materials similar to those that are predominant in the area.
- Use parking signs compatible with those in the City Center signage program.

Visual Impacts of Parking Structures

Parking structures should be designed to enhance the activity of the streetscape in the City Center.

7. Design a parking structure so that it creates a visually attractive and active street edge.

- When feasible, a parking structure in the City Center should be wrapped with a multi-story retail/commercial space to shield the facility from the street and to make the entire building visually pleasing.
- Other methods of accomplishing this include, but are not limited to:
 - retail/commercial wrap
 - murals or public art
 - landscaping
 - product display cases

8. An above ground parking structure should be designed to be compatible with traditional buildings in the surrounding area.

- Respect the regular window pattern and other architectural elements of adjacent historic buildings.



Design a parking structure so that it creates a visually attractive and active pedestrian environment. The series of photographs illustrates this.



The context for the parking structure (above) is two- to four-story brick commercial buildings.



The parking structure (left) incorporates a wrap of retail stores along the street edge. The storefronts are contemporary interpretations of the historic downtown context.



Along one street edge of the parking structure (above left) is the auto-oriented entrance.

9. Incorporate design elements that emphasize human scale and avoid imposing monolithic structures.

- Parking facilities need to conform to the standards in Chapter 1 for Alterations and New Construction.

Security and Pedestrian Circulation

10. Design a parking facility so that there is quick access and clear, separate pedestrian routes to the outside.

- Direct connections between a parking structure and its supporting businesses are desirable.
- Interior and exterior lighting should be planned to assure user safety.
- Encourage pedestrian use of the street front access and observation points by providing pedestrian facilities.
- Develop mixed-use nodes of activity (such as espresso stands or other small vending kiosks or cafes) near pedestrian entries to parking areas.
- Maximize visibility of pedestrians within the facility and avoid creation of dimly lit or isolated areas where miscreants can hide.
- Service and storage functions should be located away from the street edge and generally should not be visible from the street. (Check location)

Bicycles and Alternate Transportation

11. Encourage installation of bike racks in covered well-lit, publicly visible areas.

12. Encourage landscaping areas and trees be integrated into built projects.

This could be done:

- As part of the building structure
- On the roof
- Adjacent to public right-of-way areas where allowed

Multi-Modal Transportation Coordination

- 13. Design pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle circulation to develop a hierarchy of design priorities that support multi-modal transportation.**
 - All projects should consider pedestrian safety, convenience and comfort of circulation.
 - All public and private projects should support increased use of transit, carpool, bicycle and pedestrian access to downtown.

- 14. Covered and convenient bicycle parking areas are necessary to encourage bicycle travel.**
 - Bicycle parking for all employees may be provided within the building or at secondary entries.
 - While it will not be appropriate or feasible to provide covered public bicycle parking with every project, all projects should consider the feasibility and the need for dry, secure and convenient bicycle parking in the vicinity.

- 15. Coordinate with bus stops as appropriate to encourage bus travel.**
 - Where appropriate, provide convenient and attractive amenities in the immediate vicinity of bus stops.

Hardscape Surface Material Selection

- 16. Consider Low-Impact Development (LID) techniques to control stormwater generation and improvement aesthetics where feasible. Some examples include:**
 - Many porous pavement surfaces have been developed to allow stormwater to infiltrate directly into the ground where there are permeable subsoils or be slowed significantly and collected in underdrains where there are impervious subsoils. Examples of porous paving materials include;
 - ◆ Porous concrete
 - ◆ Grass paving such as Grasspavers
 - ◆ Permeable Interlocking Concrete Pavers such as *EcoStore*
 - ◆ Reinforced Gravel such as *Gravelpave*

4. All Projects

These design standards apply to all projects in the City Center. They include certain site improvements, alterations to existing structures, new construction and signage.

Lighting

Lighting designs should enhance one's ability to interpret the historic character of the street, as seen at night, should not overwhelm it and should facilitate safety and security.

1. Use lighting for the following:

- To accent architectural details.
- To accent building entries.
- To accent signs.
- To illuminate sidewalks.

2. Use lighting as it was used historically in the area.

- Shielded lighting is preferred.
- Lighting should not dominate a facade or the street.
- Washing the entire facade with light in some cases may be appropriate.



Mount an awning or canopy to accentuate character-defining features.



Simple canopy shapes are appropriate for rectangular openings.

Awnings and Canopies

Historically, awnings and canopies have been a successful part of the City Center and their use is encouraged. Awnings should encourage sidewalk activity and should individually serve to protect pedestrians from the weather, especially at all entrances. Awnings should be integrated into the design of the building.

3. A fixed metal canopy is appropriate.

4. A fabric awning is also appropriate.

- Operable awnings are encouraged.
- Use colors that are compatible with the overall color scheme of the facade. Solid colors or simple muted striped patterns may be appropriate.
- Awnings that obscure character defining elements are inappropriate.

5. Internal illumination in an awning is inappropriate.

6. Mount an awning or canopy to accentuate character-defining features.

- It should be mounted to highlight moldings that may be found above the storefront and should not hide character-defining features.
- Its mounting should not damage significant features and historic details.



Odd shaped awnings are inappropriate for historical buildings. For example, a bull-nose awning, such as the one seen above, is out of character.

Mechanical Equipment and Service Utilities

7. Minimize the visual impacts of mechanical equipment.

- Screen equipment from view.
- Do not locate window air conditioning units or satellite dishes on the building's primary facade.
- Use low-profile mechanical units on rooftops that are not visible from public ways.

8. Minimize the visual impacts of utility connections and service boxes.

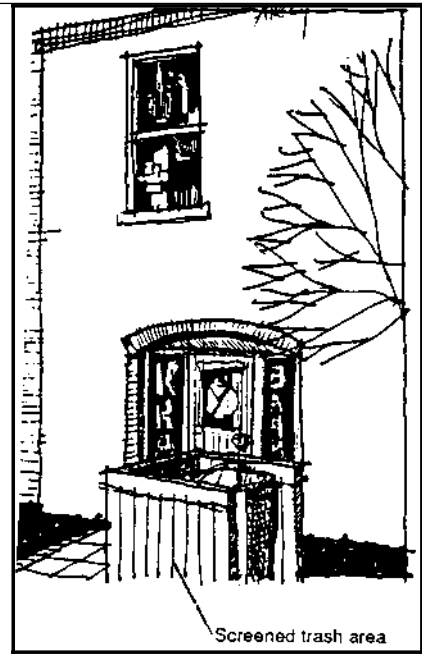
- Locate them on secondary walls when feasible.

9. Locate standpipes and other service equipment such that they will not damage historic facade materials.

- Cutting channels into historic facade materials damages the historic building fabric and is inappropriate.
- Avoid locating such equipment on the front facade.

10. Minimize the visual impact of trash storage and service areas.

- Dumpsters shall be screened from view.
- Locate service areas away from major pedestrian routes, typically in the rear.
- Consider placing gates on trash storage areas to further diminish their visual impact.



Minimize the visual impact of trash storage and service areas. Dumpsters should be screened from view.

Technical Maintenance and Repairs

Regular and periodic maintenance of a historic building assures that more expensive preservation and restoration measures will not be needed at a future date. Historic buildings were typically very well built and were meant to last decades and centuries into the future. Preventive maintenance is intended to keep moisture from remaining in and around the structure.

11. Use the gentlest possible procedures for cleaning and refinishing historic materials.

- Abrasive methods such as sandblasting are prohibited, as it permanently erodes building materials and finishes and accelerates deterioration.
- For cleaning masonry, use procedures such as low pressure water and detergents. Do not apply acid cleaners to materials such as limestone and marble. Conduct surface cleaning tests before beginning a cleaning procedure.
- It is recommended that a firm experienced in the cleaning of historic buildings be hired to advise on the best, low impact method of cleaning appropriate to the project.
- Property owners also should note that early paint layers may be lead-based, in which case, special procedures are required for its treatment.
- *Technical information is available at the City of Bellingham, Office of Neighborhoods and Community Development and Planning Department.*

12. Maintenance of streets and alleys.

- Clean debris from sidewalks and alleys, especially where site drainage may be affected.
- Clean garbage around dumpsters.
- Property owners are responsible for keeping the sidewalk clean, and must patch the sidewalk where they initiate work that causes cuts in the pavement or bricks.

13. Maintenance of upper story windows.

- Clean debris from upper story windows.
- Re-glaze loose glass. This will reduce air leaks.
- Install weather-stripping. This will enhance energy conservation significantly.
- Replace broken glass.



Regular and periodic maintenance of a historic building assures that more expensive preservation and restoration measures will not be needed at a future date.

14. Maintenance of storefronts.

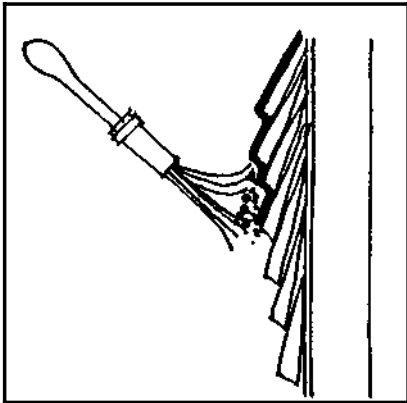
- Repair damaged kickplates.
- Re-caulk display windows to reduce air infiltration.
- Install weather-stripping around doors.
- Re-point mortar where necessary. Use the proper procedure for re-pointing, matching color, texture and detailing of the original masonry.

15. Maintenance of roofs.

- Clean debris from gutters and downspouts to prevent the backing up of water.
- Patch leaks in the roof. This should be a high priority for building maintenance.
- Replace deteriorated flashing.
- Re-point eroded mortar in the parapet wall, using the appropriate mortar mix.
- Re-solder downspout connections to prevent water from leaking into walls.
- Connect downspouts to underground sewers where possible. Do not allow water to disperse at the foundation of a building. This water may cause damage to the foundation.

16. Maintenance of awnings and canopies.

- Replace worn fabric awnings.
- Re-secure loose awning hardware.
- Wash fabric awnings regularly. This will help extend the life of the fabric. Spray with water from the underside first, to lift dirt particles, then rinse them off.



Plan repainting carefully.

17. Maintenance of signs.

- Re-secure sign mounts to the building front.
- Repaint faded graphics.
- Repair worn wiring.
- Replace burned out bulbs.
- Remove obsolete signs.
- Preserve historic painted signs in place as decorative features.

18. Masonry and Paint

- Plan painting carefully. Emphasis should be on *removing* paint from painted masonry – continued painting should be encouraged only when it has been demonstrated that the underlying masonry was never meant to be exposed, or has deteriorated to the point where exposure to weather is detrimental.

19. Plan repainting carefully.

- If masonry has been painted, it may be preferable to continue to repaint it, because paint removal methods may cause damage to the building materials and finish.
- Note that frequent repainting of trim materials may cause a build-up of paint layers that obscures architectural details. When this occurs, consider stripping paint layers to retrieve details. However, if stripping is necessary, use the gentlest means possible, being careful not to damage architectural details and finishes.
- Remember good preparation is key to successful repainting but also the buildup of old paint is an important historic record of the building. The removal of old paint, by the gentlest means possible, should be undertaken only if necessary to the success of the repainting..
- Old paint may contain lead. Precautions must be taken when sanding or scraping is necessary.

Signs

A sign typically serves two functions: First, to attract attention, and second to convey information. If the building front is well designed, it alone can serve the attention-getting function, allowing the sign to be focused on conveying information in a well conceived manner. All new signs should be developed with the overall context of the building and of the Character Area in mind. (For more information regarding specific Character Areas refer to the *City Center Master Plan*.)

20. Consider the building front as part of an overall sign program.

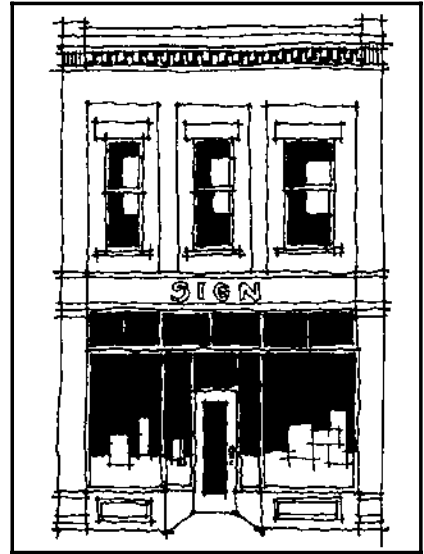
- Coordinate the overall facade composition, including ornamental details and signs.
- Signs also should be in proportion to the building, such that they do not dominate the appearance.
- Develop a master sign plan for the entire building front, which should be used to guide individual sign design decisions.
- Signs should be integral with the building's architecture.

21. A sign should be subordinate to the overall building composition.

- A sign should appear to be in scale with the facade.
- Locate a sign on a building such that it will emphasize design elements of the facade itself. In no case should a sign obscure architectural details or features.
- Mount signs to fit within existing architectural features. Use signs to help reinforce the horizontal lines of moldings and transoms seen along the street.

22. A sign should be in character with the material, color and detail of the building.

- Simple letter styles and graphic designs are appropriate.



The overall façade composition including ornamental details and signs, should be coordinated.



Any sign that visually overpowers the building or obscures significant architectural features is inappropriate.



Where several businesses share a building, coordinate the signs in a directory or use a master sign plan.

23. Flush-mounted wall signs may be considered.

- A flush-mounted wall sign is one that is mounted flat to the wall; in most cases, a flush-mounted wall sign should be positioned just above the display window. It should not be located above second floor windows.
- When feasible, place a wall sign such that it aligns with others in the block.
- When planning a wall sign, determine if decorative moldings exist that could define a “sign panel.” If so, locate flush-mounted signs such that they fit within panels formed by moldings or transom panels on the facade. In no case should a sign obscure significant facade features.

24. A directory sign may be considered in some land use areas.

- Where several businesses share a building, coordinate the signs. Align several smaller signs, or group them into a single panel as a directory to make them easier to locate.
- Use similar forms or backgrounds for the signs to tie them together visually and make them easier to read.
- *See the Bellingham Land Use Development Ordinance for the maximum sign area.*

25. Projecting signs may be considered in some land use areas.

- A projecting sign should be located near the business entrance, just above the door or to the side of it, and should be a minimum of eight feet in height.
- Note that other approvals may be required to allow a sign to overhang the public right-of-way.
- *See the Bellingham Land Use Development Ordinance for more guidance about projecting signs.*

26. A window sign may be considered in some land use areas.

- A window sign may be painted on or hung just inside a window.
- *See the Bellingham Land Use Development Ordinance for the maximum sign area.*

27. Free-standing or pole mounted signs may be considered in some land use areas.

- A free-standing sign may be used in the front yard of a residence with a commercial use.
- *See the Bellingham Land Use Development Ordinance for more guidance about pole mounted signs.*

28. Signs that are out of character with those seen historically, and that would alter the historic character of the street, are inappropriate.

- See the *Bellingham Land Use Development Ordinance* for prohibited signs.

29. Sign materials should be compatible with that of the building facade.

- Painted wood and metal are appropriate materials for signs. Their use is encouraged. Unfinished materials, including unpainted wood, are discouraged because they are out of character with the historic context.
- Highly reflective materials that will be difficult to read are inappropriate.

30. Symbol signs are encouraged.

- Symbol signs add interest to the street, are quickly read and are remembered better than written words.

31. Use colors for the sign that are compatible with those of the building front.

32. The light for a sign should be an indirect source.

- Signs should be subdued, using incandescent exterior lighting. Internal illumination is inappropriate unless a soft “halo” type light is used. Neon signs may be acceptable where appropriate. Signs should not blink, revolve, vary in intensity or otherwise appear to move.



Appropriate: Light shall be directed at the sign from an external, shielded lamp.
