

# DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES

For the City of  
GRAND FORKS, NORTH DAKOTA

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# INTRODUCTION

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The Grand Forks, North Dakota downtown area first took shape during the late 1800's, when the first major, masonry structures were built. Commercial and multiple-use buildings were mainly built in the Commercial Style, featuring simple decoration and many window openings, inspired by the Chicago School. A few structures also show examples of Romanesque heavy stonework and arches, and Classicist monumental entryways. While many historic structures in the downtown have been lost in the intervening years, enough still exist to suggest the rich visual character that the downtown once enjoyed. A strong basis for maintaining a historically scaled downtown remains and can be strengthened through coordinated development efforts.



This document provides guidance to those undertaking new construction and renovations of existing structures within the downtown area of Grand Forks, North Dakota. These guidelines communicate the expectations of the Downtown Design Review Board regarding design proposals for properties within the downtown area. Reviewing development and redevelopment proposals for the downtown area for compliance with these guidelines will facilitate the coordination of visual and spatial characteristics of structures in the downtown. These guidelines are intended to preserve and enhance the existing historic character and scale of the downtown area while facilitating new development.

**Above left:** 124 North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street

**Above right:** 102 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street

**Below left:** 21 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street

**Below right:** 2 North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street

# **BOUNDARIES OF THE DOWNTOWN AREA**

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The “downtown area” subject to these guidelines is comprised of the area within the B-4 (Central Business) District. The streets defined as “major streets” for purposes of these guidelines are as follows: DeMers Avenue, Kittson Avenue, South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, South 4<sup>th</sup> Street and South 5<sup>th</sup> Street.

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# PRINCIPLES

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1. Exterior renovation and new construction within the Grand Forks downtown area shall comply with these Guidelines. Any exterior renovation of structures within the Grand Forks downtown area over 50 years old shall also comply with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, published by the U.S. Department of the Interior (1990 revision).
2. Any new construction or exterior renovation of an existing structure, within the Grand Forks downtown area shall reflect the historic context of the downtown in scale, bulk, massing, material, color, texture, line and pattern. Contemporary designs shall respect the historic character of their context, and shall maintain the street building line established by their neighbors. Additions shall be such that, were they to be removed, the essential form of the existing building would remain.
3. Historic elements, distinguishing features, and examples of craftsmanship shall not be removed or covered during alterations of existing structures within the Grand Forks downtown area. Where repair of such elements or features are not feasible, like replacements shall be considered. Modern materials that have been applied to historic facades shall be removed and not replaced. All materials used in facade renovations and new construction shall be of high quality and durability, to match or reflect existing contextual materials.

4. Signage, awnings and lighting shall not cover architectural facade elements, and shall be in scale with the facade and immediate context. These elements shall reflect historic prototypes in scale and placement but subject to design review.
  
5. New off-street parking facilities to be provided in conjunction with renovations or new construction shall be screened from view from the street, and be located either behind, within, underneath or between structures. In no case shall off-street parking occur in front of a new building within the Grand Forks downtown area.
  
6. All new construction and renovations shall be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

# 1. SITE

These guidelines will affect the general layout of new construction and additions to existing properties. They are intended to provide design freedom, while requiring that the massing and arrangement of older downtown buildings be respected. They also reinforce the continuous street facades and higher density that are unique to the downtown area.

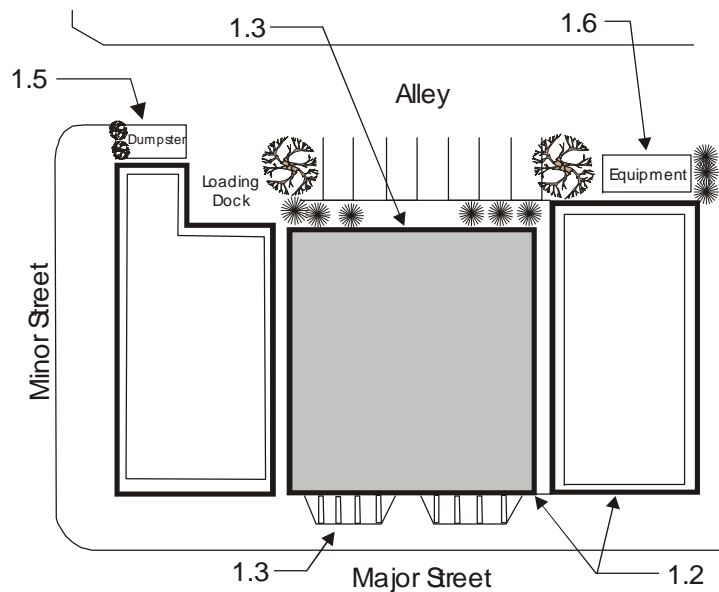


Figure 1: Site Diagram

- 1.1 Any new construction, or exterior renovation of an existing structure, within the Grand Forks downtown area shall reflect the historic context of the downtown in scale, bulk, massing, material, color, texture, line and pattern. Contemporary designs shall respect the historic character of their context, and shall maintain the street building line established by their neighbors. Additions shall be such that, were they to be removed, the essential form of the existing building would remain.
- 1.2 The “footprint” of new structures should extend to the public right-of-way line at all street facades, up to at least the second floor for multiple-story structures (see Figure 1).
- 1.3 Main entrance(s) to all buildings must be on the major street facade, with secondary entrance(s) as necessary from off-street parking areas or secondary streets facades (see Figure 1).
- 1.4 Building entries may be inset from the street facade, to allow for protection from the elements, at the first floor level only.

Upper level balconies on street facade(s) shall also be set into the building, rather than projecting.

- 1.5** All dumpsters and loading facilities must be accessed from alleys or minor streets. They must be screened from view from the street with fencing or landscaping (see Section 3E for guidelines regarding screening) (see Figure 1).
- 1.6** Equipment (such as air conditioner units or exhaust fans) is to be screened from view, and located either in rear of building or on the roof (see Section 3E for guidelines regarding screening). No equipment shall be mounted on street facade(s) (see Figure 1).
- 1.7** All site improvements are subject to design approval as they must be coordinated with the City's streetscape improvement specifications. Coordinate with the City prior to undertaking the following:
  - A. Repair or replacement of sidewalks or other paving.
  - B. Alteration of sidewalk, parking lot or planting bed grades or elevations.
  - C. Installation of planters, benches, litter receptacles, bollards, or other street furniture.
  - D. Planting of trees or other landscape material.
- 1.8** Artificial plants are not allowed in any exterior planters in the downtown area, except as part of temporary seasonal decorations.

## 2. PARKING

These guidelines will affect the location and layout of all off-street parking in the downtown area. They reinforce the continuous street facades and the focus on pedestrian activity that are unique to the downtown area. Refer to other applicable regulations for number of spaces required, number of handicapped spaces to be accommodated, and so forth.

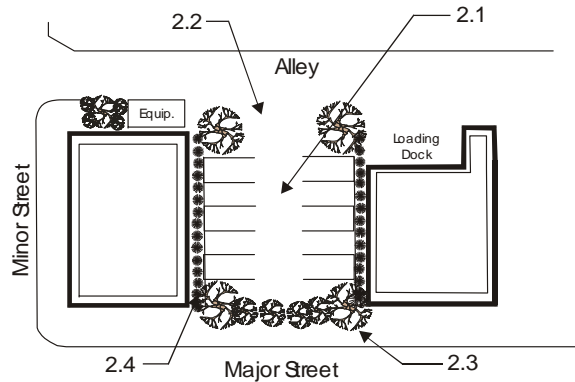


Figure 2: Parking Diagram

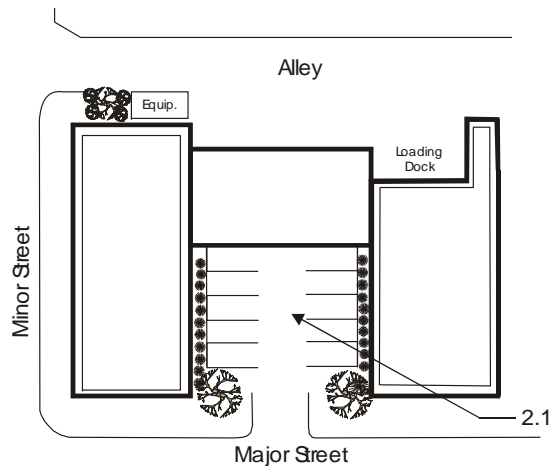


Figure 2a: Not Allowed

- 2.1** Off-street parking is to be located behind, within, underneath or between downtown structures (see Figure 2). New off-street parking created in the downtown area may not be located in front of any building (see Figure 2a).
- 2.2** Access to off-street parking should be from a rear or side alley, or from a minor street (see Figure 2).
- 2.3** Off-street parking must be shielded from view of the major streets using either: 1) dense landscaping, 2) open fencing and landscaping, or 3) a low masonry wall and open fencing (see section 3E for guidelines regarding fences) (see Figure 2). Similar treatments on minor streets are strongly encouraged.
- 2.4** A landscaped edge between parking areas and building walls is strongly encouraged (see Figure 2).
- 2.5** Covered parking – whether under a building, within a building, or in a separate parking structure – must be screened from view from the street, either architecturally or with landscaping. Sloped parking ramps must not be visible on any building elevation.

# 3. ARCHITECTURE

## A. BUILDING BASE AND TOP

These guidelines will affect the architectural treatment of new and existing structures, so historical features are maintained where existing, and respected by new buildings and additions.



Figure 3: 311 DeMers Avenue

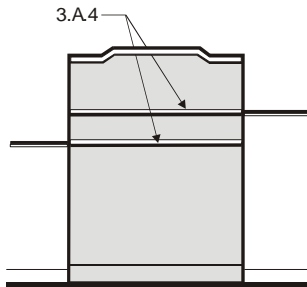


Figure 4: Height Diagram



Figure 5: 322 DeMers Avenue

- 3.A.1** The first story of downtown buildings should be designed to reflect a pedestrian scale, taking cues from existing downtown buildings whose historical integrity remains intact.
- 3.A.2** Buildings should meet the ground with a solid (preferably masonry or metal panel) base treatment that creates a visual transition from sidewalk to building wall (see Figure 5).
- 3.A.3** At existing buildings, the original cornice detail, height and profile should be maintained and repaired as needed (see Figure 3).
- 3.A.4** If new structures or new additions are taller than immediately adjacent older buildings, existing cornice height(s) must be reflected on new elevations with an upper floor setback, facade material change or string course (see Figure 4).
- 3.A.5** New structures shall be designed to utilize flat roof and parapet wall construction similar to that of existing structures. Mansard roofs, dormer windows, pediments gables, and visible pitched roofs are not generally appropriate in the downtown commercial area.

# 3. ARCHITECTURE

## B. MATERIALS, FINISHES AND COLORS

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These guidelines will outline the materials, finishes and colors that may be used in both renovations and new projects. They allow for design freedom while insuring that structures in the downtown area have historic integrity and are reasonably visually coordinated.

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Figure 6: 201 North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street

**3.B.1** The following materials and finishes are most appropriate for use in renovations and new construction in the downtown area, to reflect existing structures (see Figures 6 and 7):

- 1) Brick
- 2) Cut stone (smooth or rusticated).
- 3) Concrete masonry units (CMU).
- 4) Painted or stained wood trim elements.
- 5) Anodized aluminum with baked on enamel.



Figure 7: 21 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street

**3.B.2** The following materials and finishes are not appropriate as exterior building treatments on historic buildings in the downtown area:

- 1) Rustic-finished wood (such as unfinished siding, diagonal siding or wood shingle wall cladding).
- 2) Aluminum or vinyl siding systems.
- 3) Imitation rock or marble work.
- 4) Large-aggregate concrete wall panels.
- 5) Glass curtain wall systems.
- 6) Shiny or reflective finishes.
- 7) Asphalt roof shingles.



Figure 8: 10 North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street



Figure 8a: 151 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street

- 3.B.3** Colors should be muted, with no more than two or three colors used on each facade (see Figure 8).
- 3.B.4** Natural masonry color(s) should be chosen for the body of the building. Contrasting trim color(s) should be used to highlight architectural elements, such as windows and door trim (see Figure 8).
- 3.B.5** Applied elements – awnings, signage, light fixtures and so forth – should coordinate with, rather than overwhelm, the architectural color scheme of the building.
- 3.B.6** The utilitarian brick side and rear facades of existing buildings should be left unpainted, clean and in good repair.
- 3.B.7** If equipment is mounted behind louvered panels for ventilation purposes, louvers should be oriented to conceal the equipment from view, and should be finished to match the adjacent wall color (rather than a contrasting trim color ) so as to minimize their visual impact (see Figure 8a).
- 3.B.8** If balconies are proposed on any downtown buildings along major streets, they should be inset into the building at street facades, with solid partial height enclosures integrated into the building’s architecture. Balconies on non-major street facades shall be subject to the material requirements outlined in Section 3E (Fences and Railings) of these guidelines.

# 3. ARCHITECTURE

## C. WINDOWS AND DOORS

These guidelines will outline the types of windows and doors that may be used in both renovations and new projects. They allow for design freedom while insuring that buildings in the downtown area respect the scale and craftsmanship of existing historic window and door types.

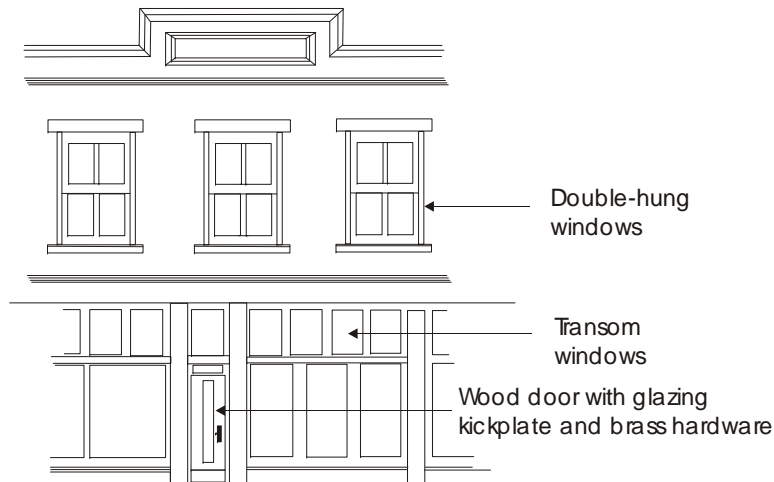


Figure 9: Appropriate window & door types

- 3.C.1** Windows and doors should reflect the historic types found in the downtown area in scale, proportion and construction. Historic storefront windows and entry doors can utilize modern frame systems if necessary, but glazing should not extend to the ground (see Figure 9).
- 3.C.2** Existing windows and doors, including transom windows at the first floor, should be exposed and repaired where possible. New windows and doors should reflect the original style if replacement is necessary. New openings should not be cut into buildings and original opening sizes should not be reduced or filled in.
- 3.C.3** Upper-floor windows in new construction should typically be individual openings in solid wall planes, reflecting the historic proportions of existing window openings found in the downtown area.



Examples of appropriate hardware

**3.C.4** The following window and door types are not appropriate in historic buildings in the downtown area:

- 1) Curtain wall glazing systems.
- 2) Horizontal or vertical strip windows (see Figure 10).
- 3) Mirrored or visibly reflective glazing.
- 4) Fully glazed, or nearly fully glazed, doors (though they may be considered acceptable on secondary elevations).

**3.C.5** Signage can be painted directly onto window and door glazing at the first floor, subject to the guidelines in the Signage section of this document.

**3.C.6** Existing and new doors must comply with all accessibility and life safety codes, while still reflecting an appearance in keeping with the original character of the building.



Figure 10: 421 DeMers Avenue

# 3. ARCHITECTURE

## D. AWNINGS

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These guidelines will affect the type of awnings that may be applied to building facades throughout the downtown area. They allow for design freedom while insuring that awnings are applied to both existing and new structures appropriately and in a coordinated manner.

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- 3.D.1** Protected entries and covered arcades at new construction are encouraged.
- 3.D.2** Visually coordinated, full width awnings are encouraged at both new and existing buildings to facilitate a continuous pedestrian environment.
- 3.D.3** Awning configuration should coordinate with adjacent building awnings in height, width and profile.
- 3.D.4** Awnings should not cover architectural elements.
- 3.D.5** Simple pitched awning profiles, either retractable or fixed, are most appropriate (see Figure 11). Box awnings (enclosed from below), arched, or quarter-round awning profiles are not as appropriate in the downtown area.
- 3.D.6** Awning colors should be muted, and should coordinate with the building facade color scheme.

**3.D.7** Weather-treated fabric awnings are encouraged. Vinyl awnings may be used, but garish colors are not appropriate in the downtown area.

**3.D.8** Signage may be applied to the narrow vertical face of awnings only, subject to the guidelines in the Signage section of this document.

**3.D.9** Internally illuminated and back-lit awnings are not allowed in the downtown area.

# 3. ARCHITECTURE

## E. FENCES AND RAILINGS

These guidelines will outline the types of fencing allowed in the downtown area, and the uses for which each type is appropriate.

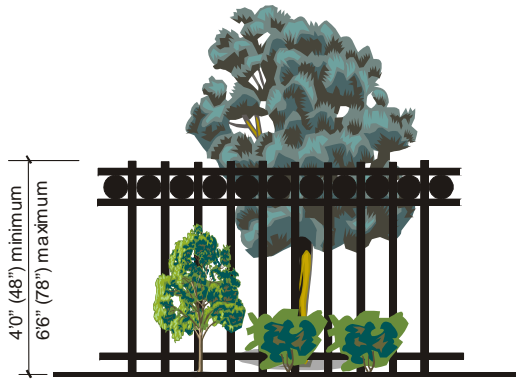


Figure 13: Fence and wall example



Figure 14: Fence example

**3.E.1** Fences used to shield parking areas from view must fall within a height range of 4'-0" (48") and 6'-6" (78"). Masonry or other enclosures for equipment and dumpsters must be at least 6'-0" (72") in height and fully screened.

**3.E.2** Wrought iron open fencing is allowed for the shielding of parking areas from view from the street, if utilized in conjunction with landscaping and if finished in a dark, solid color (see Figure 13).

**3.E.3** Masonry walls may be installed for the following purposes in the downtown area:

- 1) As full height enclosures for equipment and dumpster holding areas behind downtown buildings, if a dark, solid color.
- 2) As partial height enclosures (2'-0" maximum) for downtown parking areas, if used in conjunction with wrought iron fencing and / or landscaping and if a dark, solid color (per Figure 14).

**3.E.4** Wood fencing may only be used to enclose equipment and dumpster holding areas behind downtown buildings, and must be painted a dark, solid color.

**3.E.5** Chain link fencing may not be permanently installed in the downtown area.

**3.E.6** Railings at ramps, stairways and balconies are subject to applicable life safety and accessibility codes. The following types are allowable:

- 1) Inset balconies (required at major street facades) should utilize partial-height solid enclosures integrated with the architecture of the building, in lieu of open railings.
- 2) Projecting balconies (allowed at non-major street facades) should utilize decorative metal railings coordinated with the design and color scheme of the building. Wooden railings are not appropriate for exterior use in the downtown area.

## 4. SIGNAGE

These guidelines will outline the types of signage that may be applied to buildings in the downtown area. They allow for design freedom while insuring that signage is applied to both existing and new structures appropriately and in a coordinated manner.

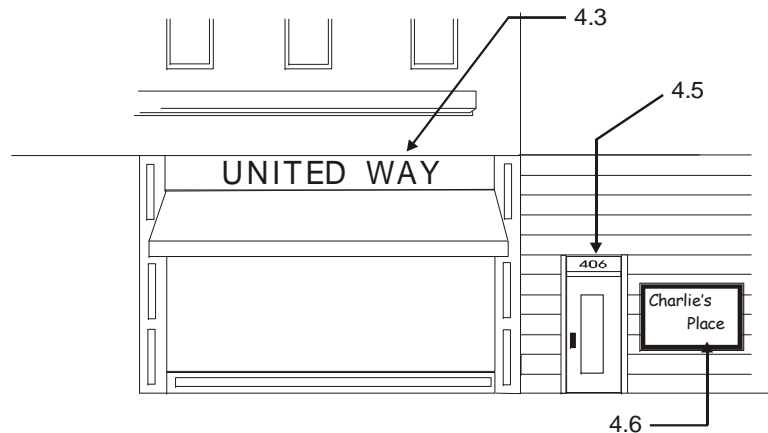


Figure 15: Appropriate signage types

- 4.1 Signage must be integrated with architectural facade elements, and should never cover architectural details.
- 4.2 Signage may not project above the cornice line or be mounted on the roof of any downtown building.
- 4.3 Where possible, primary signage should be located in the space above first floor windows and below second floor windows (see Figure 15). Permanent signage may advertise only the resident business(es).
- 4.4 Total square footage of signage allowed per business must be in compliance with City sign ordinance regulations. Signage must also comply with ADA regulations.
- 4.5 Street number must be prominently displayed at the main entrance to every building, and be visible from the street (see Figure 15).
- 4.6 Plaque signs mounted directly to building facades beside secondary entrances (such as to second floor offices) are allowed if small and subdued in nature, and if in compliance with the other requirements of this section (see Figure 15).

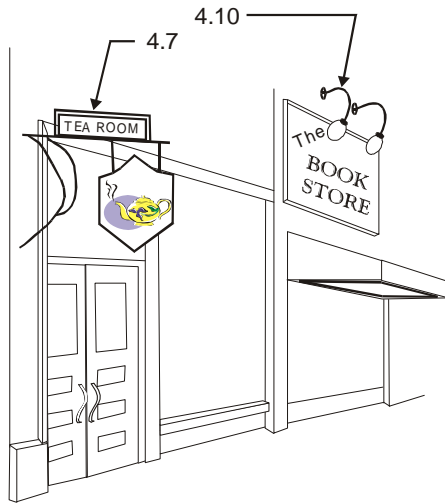
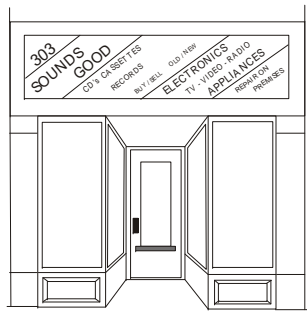


Figure 16: Appropriate signage types

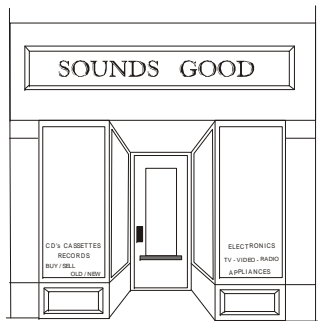


Figure 17: 23 S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street

- 4.7 Projecting signs bracketed to building facades beside or above doorways are allowed if small and subdued in nature, and if in compliance with other requirements of this section (see Figure 16).
- 4.8 Signage painted directly on storefront glass or applied to approved awnings (per Section 3D) is allowed, subject to other requirements of this section (see Figure 17).
- 4.9 Temporary signs may be hung on the inside of storefront windows or displayed outside (“sandwich sign” style), subject to the requirements of this section and applicable City ordinances.
- 4.10 Individual letters and signs illuminated by wall-mounted fixtures are recommended (see figure 16).
- 4.11 Neon signs are permitted, but the gross sign area of signs that incorporate the use of neon may not exceed 5% of building face.
- 4.12 The following sign types are **not** allowed in the downtown area:
  - 1) illuminated box signs, either flat or projecting.
  - 2) internally illuminated awnings.
  - 3) flashing signs.
  - 4) moving signs, or signs with moving elements.
  - 5) signage painted directly onto building elevations (including sides and rear).
  - 6) electronic or fixed letter boards (theater marquees excepted).



Before



After

Figure 18: Examples of simplified signage

**4.13** Signage graphics are subject to the following regulations (see Figure 18 for examples):

- 1) Signs must contain a minimum of wording and the minimum reasonably readable type size (ADA requirements must be met).
- 2) Font styles should be limited to one or two easily readable styles per business.
- 3) Dark lettering on a light background is encouraged, and sufficient visual contrast is required (ADA requirements must be met).
- 4) Garish colors are inappropriate for permanent downtown signage.
- 5) Wood, metal, stone and fabric are recommended materials.



Before



After

# 5. LIGHTING

These guidelines will outline the types of lighting that may be applied to building facades in the downtown area. They allow for design freedom while insuring that lighting is applied to both existing and new structures appropriately and in a coordinated manner.



Figure 19: Examples of appropriate lighting fixtures

- 5.1 Lighting at building facades should serve only to illuminate entries, adjacent pedestrian areas and displays, or to highlight significant architectural elements above the first floor.
- 5.2 Lighting may be placed at doorways, below awnings, in display windows and as needed to illuminate signage or historic elements (refer also to the Signage section of these guidelines).
- 5.3 Historically accurate fixtures and appropriately scaled contemporary fixtures are allowed (see Figure 19).
- 5.4 The following lighting types are not allowed in the downtown area:
  - 1) Visible fluorescent bulbs.
  - 2) Neon lighting on building exterior (except signage per section 4.11).
  - 3) Colored bulbs, except for temporary seasonal decoration.
  - 4) Internally illuminated awnings.
- 5.5 Exposed or painted metal finishes are most appropriate for lighting fixtures in the downtown. Fixture color(s) should be muted, and should coordinate with facade and signage color scheme.

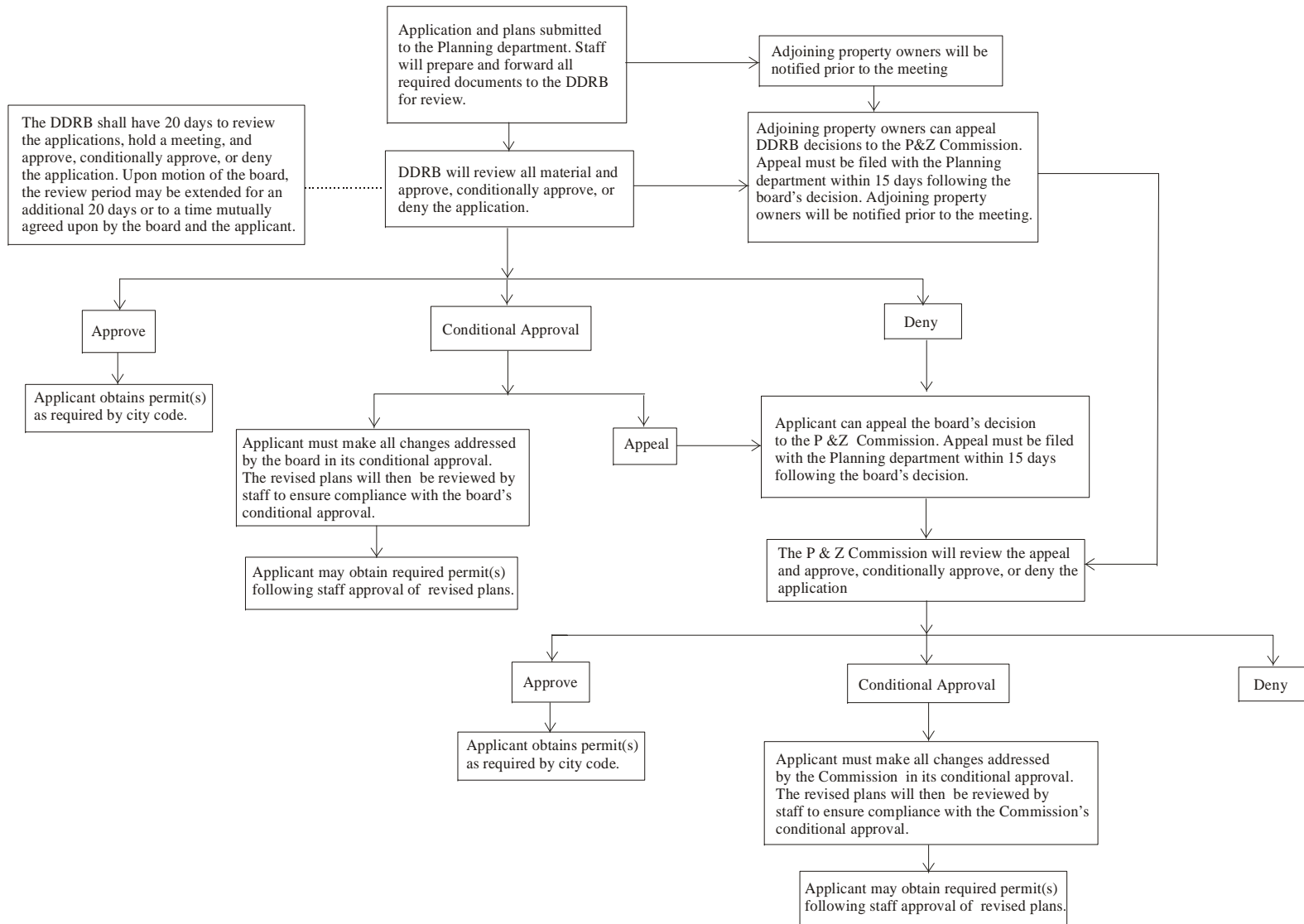
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# APPENDICES

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- A. DESIGN REVIEW APPLICATION PROCEDURES**
- B. DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**
- C. CONTACT INFORMATION**
- D. GLOSSARY OF TERMS**
- E. STREETScape INFORMATION**

# A. DESIGN REVIEW APPLICATION PROCEDURES



# B. DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD INFORMATION

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## Current DDRB Membership

Paul Holje (Term Expires: November 2011)  
(Downtown Business Representative)  
Dakota Harvest Bakers  
17 North Third Street  
772-2100

OPEN SEAT  
(Architectural Representative)

OPEN SEAT  
(History Representative)

Doug Herzog (Term Expires: November 2011)  
(Downtown Business Representative)  
CPS, Ltd.  
308 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North  
738-4048

Marsha Gunderson  
(Historic Preservation Commission Representative)  
1114 Chestnut St  
787-6731

Meredith Richards  
(Office of Urban Development Representative)  
P.O. Box 5200  
746-2545

Steve Adams  
(Planning and Zoning Commission Representative)  
1942 Prairie Rose Court  
772-4936

## C. CONTACT INFORMATION

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For assistance in researching the history of existing downtown properties, or for information regarding financing available for facade renovation in the downtown area, contact:

Office of Urban Development  
1405 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North  
Grand Forks, North Dakota 58203

To order a copy of “The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings,” 1999 revision, contact:

Superintendent of Documents  
U.S. Government Printing Office  
Washington, DC 20402  
202-512-1800

## D. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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**Aggregate:** The solid material, such as sand or stone, used in making concrete.

**Alley:** A service way providing a second means of access to properties, often from between or behind, and often one lane wide.

**Awning:** A roof-like covering extending from a building to shield a sidewalk, window or entrance from the elements, often made of fabric stretched over a metal frame.

**Base:** the bottom section, or “pedestal,” on which a facade or column visually stands.

**Bay:** A vertical division of a building facade, suggesting the underlying structure.

**Bay window:** A window structure that projects out from the building facade.

**Bollard:** A low post, often one of a series, set in the ground to prevent motor vehicles from entering an area.

**Character:** Distinguishing features or attributes.

**Column:** A vertical support member, consisting of a base, cylindrical shaft and decorative capital.

**Compatible:** Capable of existing together harmoniously, in agreement.

**Contemporary:** Here, current or modern.

**Context:** Here, the visual and functional surroundings in which a particular building occurs.

**Cornice:** The molded, often projecting horizontal decorative member uppermost on a building facade.

**Curtain wall:** A non-load-bearing wall assembly, often consisting mostly of clear and/or opaque glass panels in a metal framework.

**Dormer window:** A window in a projection built out from a sloping roof.

**Dumpster:** A large waste container, usually stored outside and emptied mechanically by a garbage truck.

**Elevation:** Here, the front, side or rear view of a building.

**Facade:** The exterior face of a building, especially the principal and most ornamental face.

**Fascia:** Here, flat horizontal band or member, often set off with moldings, on the elevation of a building.

**Gable:** Here, the triangular shape on an elevation created by the end of a pitched roof.

**Historic:** Having an importance in or an influence on history; surviving from an earlier time period.

**Human scale:** The sizes of elements which relate to the size of people.

**Integrity:** Being whole or undivided; having internal consistency.

**Lintel:** A horizontal member spanning, and carrying the load above, an opening (usually a window or door).

**Mansard:** Here, a steeply pitched roof section visible on the elevation of a building.

**Massing:** The visual shape, weight and balance of a building.

**Molding:** A decorative band of material with an ornamental profile, used to delineate parts of a facade, or to frame around door or window openings.

**Mullion/Muntin:** The slender divider between panes of glass in a window.

**Ornament:** Something that decorates or embellishes, helping to establish a style and character.

**Parapet:** The part of a wall that continues above, and conceals, the roof.

**Pediment:** Here, a triangular shape applied to a facade that suggests a pitched roof behind, derived from Classical architecture.

**Pier:** A solid masonry support member.

**Pilaster:** A shallow, rectangular column attached to a wall.

**Pitch:** Slope, usually of a roof or an awning.

**Profile:** Cross-section.

**Proportion:** A part considered in relation to the whole, with respect to comparative size, quantity or placement.

**Prototype:** An early or typical example that serves as a model for later development.

**Renovation:** Restoring to an earlier condition, from Latin words meaning “again” and “make new.”

**Right-of-way:** A publicly controlled strip of land containing at least one of the following: streets, alleys, sidewalks or public utilities.

**Rhythm:** Here, the regular recurrence of particular elements, such as buildings, windows or awnings.

**Sash:** The framework in which panes of glass are set, the movable part of an operable window.

**Scale:** The relative size of elements.

**Screen:** To conceal from view.

**Setback:** Here, the distance that a building is sited from the property line.

**Siding:** Boards, usually wood or vinyl, applied to an exterior wall to create a continuous covering.

**Sill:** The horizontal member that bears the upright portion of a frame – usually the base of a window.

**Street furniture:** Additive elements of streetscape improvements, such as light fixtures, benches, trash cans and planters.

**Street line:** Here, the front-most wall of a building facing onto a street, or the line created by several buildings standing together facing onto a street.

**Streetscape:** Architectural forms, details, materials, and color that are used in combination to create a visually coordinated street scene.

**String course:** A horizontal row of bricks or stones, sometimes protruding slightly.

**Strip windows:** A continuous horizontal band of glazing, such that the structural support for the windows is not apparent on the building exterior.

**Transom:** A window placed above a door or storefront display window, often operable.

**Trim:** Ornamental material, usually wood or metal.

## E. STREETScape INFORMATION

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*Reserved for future use*