

CITY OF ROCHESTER HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION DESIGN GUIDELINES

acknowledgements

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PRESERVATION ORGANIZATIONS

Local Organizations

Historic District Commission (HDC)
Rochester NH Historical Society
58 Hanson Street
Rochester, NH 03867
<https://rochesterhistoricalnh.org/>

State and Regional Organizations

New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources
19 Pillsbury Street
Concord, NH 03302
(603) 271-3483
preservation@dcr.nh.gov

New Hampshire Preservation Alliance
7 Eagle Square; Concord NH 03302
(603) 224-2281
www.nhpreservation.org

Historic New England
Otis House
141 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 227-3956
www.historicnewengland.org

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Historic Central Square Buildings.



Historic storefronts in the Rochester Historic District.

The City of Rochester has a very deep history evident in its collection of historic 19th century buildings. Best known for its industrial heritage around the turn of the 20th century, the waterways and the railroad pushed development of the town and made way for successful manufacturing jobs. In 1983 the National Park Service added the “Rochester Commercial and Industrial District” to the National Register of Historic Places. This high honor is reserved for communities with numerous important historic buildings that together represent a specific period of significance, and qualifies historic properties within the District to apply for a federal tax credit for income producing properties. Historic preservation is not a one-size-fits all practice. There are guiding principles established by the federal government but it is up to local communities to determine the appropriate preservation approach in their town.

Rochester is at a turning point in its history: jobs and new construction are located outside of the historic downtown, vacancies rates are high, and the majority of historic buildings along North Main Street and Hanson Street are on the tipping point of rehabilitation versus demolition. Peel away the veneer, replace vinyl windows, and restore commercial storefronts and it is clear that Rochester’s historic character is comparable to other thriving historic downtowns in New England. With some guidance, grit, and rehabilitation, the Historic District will have a renaissance that draws in new businesses, residents and visitors.

Why preserve historic resources?

Across the nation, thousands of communities promote historic preservation because doing so contributes to neighborhood vitality, variety, economic viability, and quality of life. Preserving historic buildings creates a sense of place and a sense of pride for a community and for future generations. These buildings remind residents of their history and provide visitors a connection with this unique heritage. There is an authentic quality of historic homes that cannot be replicated in new construction and in new development patterns. Historic preservation creates local construction jobs employing skilled tradespeople.

Communities that place a high level of importance on historic preservation are among those with higher levels of investment in their historic districts that result in increased economic activity and tourism. Visitors appreciate the authenticity of a well-preserved historic district which typically results in repeat visits and additional investment into the community.

Purpose of Design Guidelines

These Design Guidelines apply only to the Historic Overlay District and provide clear direction for appropriate alterations, new construction and rehabilitation within the Historic District in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Historic Preservation Principles

1. Every reasonable effort shall be made to minimize alteration of the significant features of the building.
2. The distinguishing original qualities or character of the building shall not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features shall be avoided where possible.
3. Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced wherever possible.
4. Changes that may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of the building and may be worthy of preservation.
5. All buildings shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis and that seek to create an earlier appearance shall be discouraged.
6. Alterations and new additions should be completed in a manner that can be removed or reversed in the future without damaging significant features of the historic building.

How to Use the Guidelines

Historic context, architectural terminology and architectural styles are found in Chapter 2. Quick reference guides for appropriate preservation, rehabilitation and restoration of historic architectural features are located in Chapter 3. The remainder of this document separates development into two categories: remodel/addition is Chapter 4 and a new building is addressed in Chapter 5. Signage is found in Chapter 6.

Each chapter references the two distinct development types found in the District: Central Square and the neighborhoods to the north and south of Central Square. The Central Square is the neighborhood along North Main Street between Portland and Union Streets, including a portion of Wakefield Street, Union Street and the first half of Hanson Street. Signage is addressed in a separate chapter for all properties within the District. Application requirements and other helpful documents are found in the appendix.

Each chapter begins with the goal for improvements within the District and a description of historic and existing context. A description of the historic context and purpose of the design concepts and subsequent design guidelines is found throughout each chapter to help the user understand the overall design intent. Not every guideline must be met in every project.

Design Review Process

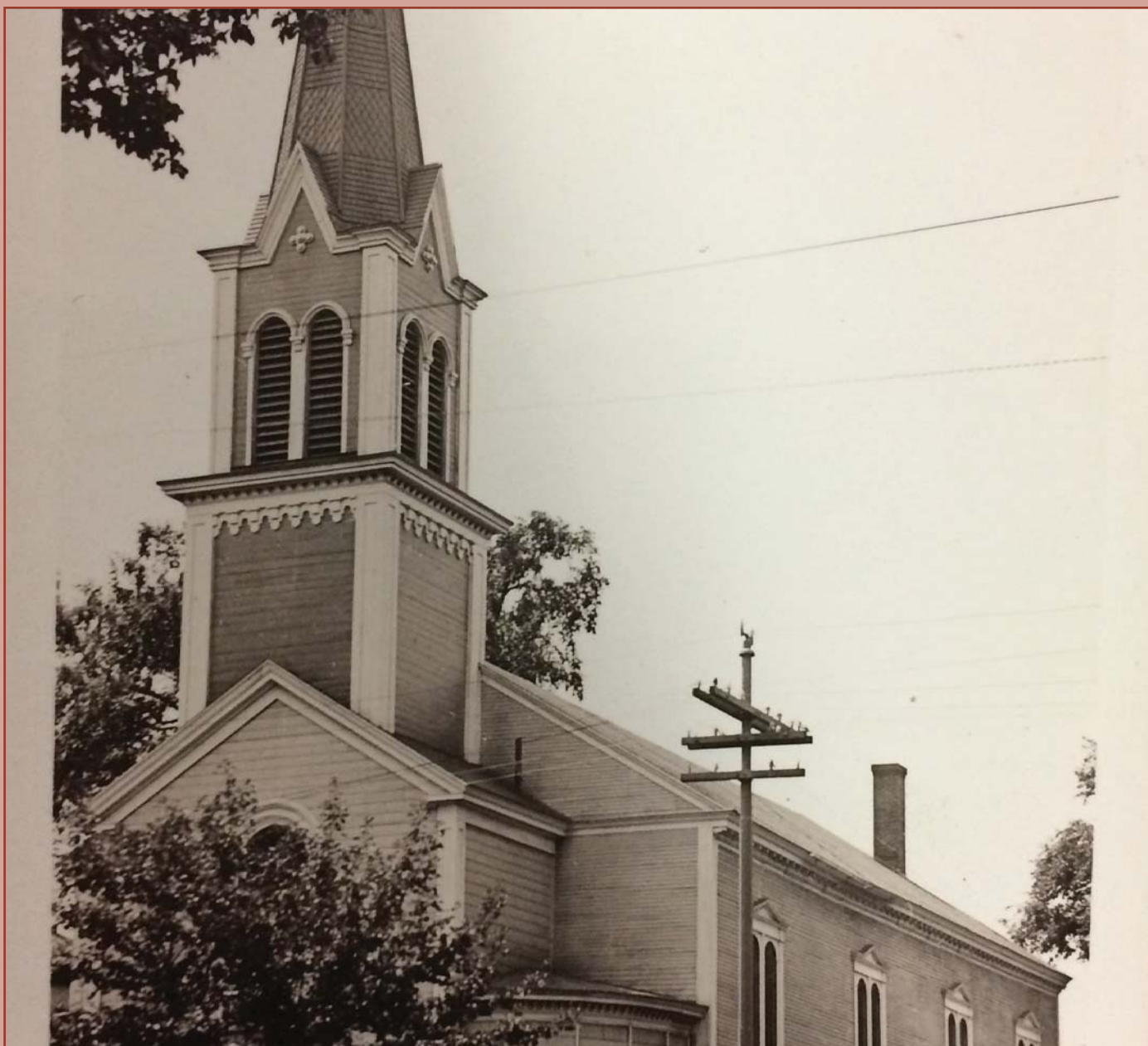
The Historic District Commission and the City of Rochester staff will use this document to determine appropriate design changes, additions and rehabilitation within the District. There are three project categories for development within the District: Exempt, Certificate of No Negative Effect, and Certificate of Appropriateness.

How do I start my project?

1. Review the Zone District Map to determine whether the property is within the Historic District Overlay and to determine whether the property is historic or non-historic.
2. Meet with City Staff to determine the appropriate chapter and review process for the scope of your project.
3. Analyze the existing neighborhood, block context, and building(s) on the subject property to identify patterns that define architectural character, enhance the pedestrian experience, and preserve a sense of place.
4. When applicable, evaluate the condition of the historic building to determine opportunities for restoration and appropriate locations for new development.
5. Identify nearby historic buildings or other key character defining features that can be incorporated into an addition or new building.



Historic building on a corner lot in Downtown Rochester.



Decorative architectural details are found throughout the Rochester Historic District.



A historic photograph of an 1875 brick building that still stands on Hanson Street.

Rochester, New Hampshire was settled in 1728 by Timothy Roberts and others, who made their way north from the Dover area. Rochester was actually chartered in 1722 but Indian conflicts made the area too dangerous to settle. The first settlement was on Haven Hill.

Several small settlements grew up in the area (Squamagonic now Gonic, East Rochester, and the settlements of Farmington and Milton, originally part of Rochester).

Eventually, the largest settlement grew at the base of Rochester Hill, where the Common now stands. A church was built, a cemetery (later moved to higher ground when a particularly wet season caused some caskets to up and float away), and signs of progress abounded.

Schools were in every neighborhood, numbering at their peak over forty, although they were not consistently funded until 1751, as ordered by the state.

Rochester's advancement as a thriving town was enhanced by its abundant farmland, then the large industries drawn to the town by its natural power sources: the rivers. Rochester was well known for its shoe factories, lumber and woolen mills.

Of particular note are the eclectic style of buildings in the downtown area. Many towns suffered large losses when a fire would break out in the downtown area, causing the destruction of many of the large wooden houses and stores. Rochester avoided this calamity, resulting in a downtown reflecting many architectural styles from boomtown façades to Federal style to grand Gothic homes which reflected their owners' prosperity. - Martha Wingate, 2018

In early 2018, the City of Rochester received a grant from the Certified Local Government Grant Program of the New Hampshire Division Historical Resources, which is federally funded through the Department of Interior. The grant funding was dedicated for the creation of a Design Guideline Manual for the City of Rochester Historic District and policy recommendations for the Historic Preservation Program.

This manual encourages appropriate historic preservation within the City of Rochester's Historic District through fundamental design guidelines. The guidelines are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation and provide clear direction to historic property owners, City of Rochester Staff, and the Historic District Commission to make informed decisions that promote historic preservation and create a cohesive Historic District.

Historic preservation is supported, cultivated and grown from the local community. In order to create Design Guidelines and recommendations to update the historic preservation program that reflect community sentiment, a comprehensive public outreach plan was developed with City of Rochester Staff to reach a broad segment of the community.

Public outreach was undertaken throughout the spring of 2018 including small group meetings, one-on-one meetings, stakeholder meetings, Board meetings, drop-ins with downtown business owners, meetings with local community groups such as the Rotary Club, and a public meeting co-hosted with Rochester Listens. Surveys were made available to the community, elected officials, and Board members both online and at meetings.

Elected officials, City Review Boards, residents, and local business owners provided feedback on existing conditions and the historic preservation process, and their vision for the future of Rochester's Historic Overlay District. There was an evident passion about the future of downtown and the rehabilitation and restoration of its invaluable historic resources. Residents of Rochester have a strong sense of place that is reflected in the community's interest in supporting iconic downtown features such as the church steeples, the downtown triangle, and a visual and physical connection to the Cocheco River.

The community also supported new development projects that reference historic architecture in the downtown.

Thank you to all participants who contributed to the project and document.



Community outreach session in May.



Breakout sessions to discuss recommendations with the public.



Group discussion with the public about the recommendations.



Community feedback on the design guidelines.



Historic Emily Cross House on Main Street.

Goal: Historic buildings require sensitive repair and rehabilitation to retain the historic character that contributes to the community, visitors and future generations.

Applicability

This Chapter applies primarily to historic buildings located within the Historic Overlay District which are under the purview of the Historic District Commission.

Contents

This Chapter provides a brief overview of best practices for rehabilitating historic buildings throughout Rochester. Each topic is consolidated into two pages as an easy user friendly handout. More extensive information is available at the City of Rochester Planning Office or on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Historic Treatment of Properties website <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm>

Quick Reference Guide

- Exterior building materials
- Porches and stoops
- Windows and doors
- Architectural details
- Roofs
- Landscape, streetscape and other features

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Historic Treatment of Properties

There are four different treatment pathways for a historic property, starting with the most preferred and least intrusive to the least preferred and most intrusive. The National Park Service established the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Historic Treatment of Properties as best practice guidelines for historic buildings after Congress adopted the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966. Recently updated in 2017, the Standards listed below are the basis for the City of Rochester's Design Guidelines.

Maintain (Preservation)

1. A property will be used as it was historically, or be given a new use that maximizes the retention of distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships. Where a treatment and use have not been identified, a property will be protected and, if necessary, stabilized until additional work may be undertaken.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Work needed to stabilize, consolidate and conserve existing historic materials and features will be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection and properly documented for future research.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. The existing condition of historic features will be evaluated to determine the appropriate level of intervention needed. Where the severity of deterioration requires repair or limited replacement of a distinctive feature, the new material will match the old in composition, design, color and texture.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archaeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

Repair (Rehabilitation)

1. A property will be used as it was historically, or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the existing condition of historic features will be evaluated to determine the appropriate level of intervention needed. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archaeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, fea-

tures, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Replace (Restoration)

1. A property will be used as it was historically, or be given a new use that interprets the property and its restoration period.
2. Materials and features from the restoration period will be retained and preserved. The removal of materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize the period will not be undertaken.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Work needed to stabilize, consolidate and conserve features for the restoration period will be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection and properly documented for future research.
4. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize the restoration period will be preserved.
5. Deteriorated features from the restoration period will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and where possible materials.
6. Replacement of missing features from the restoration period will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence. A false sense of history will not be created by adding conjectural features from other properties or by combining features that never existed together historically.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archaeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be

disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

9. Designs that were never executed historically will not be constructed.

Replicate (Reconstruction)

1. Reconstruction will be used to depict vanished or non-surviving portions of a property when documentary and physical evidence is available to permit accurate reconstruction with minimal conjecture and such reconstruction is essential to the public understanding of the property.
2. Reconstruction of a landscape, building, structure or object in its historic location will be preceded by a thorough archaeological investigation to identify and evaluate those features and artifacts which are essential to an accurate reconstruction. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
3. Reconstruction will include measures to preserve any remaining historical materials, features and spatial relationships.
4. Reconstruction will be based on the accurate duplication of historic features and elements substantiated by documentary or physical evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different features from other historic properties. A reconstructed property will re-create the appearance of the non-surviving historic property in materials, design, color and texture.
5. A reconstruction will be clearly identified as a contemporary re-creation.

Exterior Building Materials

The best way to preserve a historic building and for a property to retain its value is through a thoughtful maintenance plan. A building's first defense against the environmental elements, such as wind, rain, snow, sunlight, temperature range, and vegetation, is exterior materials. As such, exterior materials deteriorate over time due to the important role that they play. Regular maintenance, appropriate repairs and some general guidelines can slow deterioration and extend the lifecycle of a historic building well beyond that of new construction.

The majority of Rochester's historic buildings are a mix of wood, brick or stone. These hardy materials are common throughout historic New England down-towns and they convey a sense of authenticity and a sense of place. Historic building materials should be preserved in place whenever feasible. Historic building materials should never be covered with new material or subjected to harsh cleaning treatments.

Note: Primary building materials are addressed in this Section. Architectural trim and other details are addressed in a different Section.

Note: Always stabilize deteriorated or damaged material as a preliminary measure prior to undertaking preservation work.



The important contrast of original materials is evident on the steeple.



Well intentioned bushes block ground level windows



Large trees and bushes can hold moisture against wood siding which encourages rot.

3.1 Preserve original building materials.

- Avoid removing materials that are in good condition or that can be repaired. Always consider patching, splicing or consolidating material as repair options before deciding to remove original material.
- Avoid rebuilding a major portion of an exterior wall that could be repaired in place. Reconstruction degrades the integrity of a building and should be a last resort.
- If original material must be removed, then reuse it elsewhere on the building as a repair.
- Remove vegetation that is touching the building which holds moisture against the exterior material and increases deterioration.
- Ensure positive drainage that diverts water away from exterior materials, such as gutters, roof overhangs and downspouts.

3.2 Limit cleaning of masonry only when necessary to remove heavy soiling or to slow deterioration.

3.3 Materials should be consistent with traditional historic finishes.

- Masonry naturally has a water-protective layer to protect it from the elements. Painted masonry oftentimes results in irreparable water damage. Brick or stone that was not historically painted should not be painted.
- Consider removing existing paint from masonry

that was not historically painted using the gentlest means possible. Do a series of test patches on non-street facing facades before deciding on a paint removal treatment.

- Wood should be painted or stained, unless there is documentation that it was historically natural (untreated).

3.4 Match the original material in composition, design, scale, color and finish when replacing materials on primary surfaces.

- A new foundation should match in material and exposure to the original condition.
- If the original material was brick, then the replacement should match the brick size, color, dimension and the mortar type, composition and style.
- Replace the minimum amount required to complete the repair. If only a few clapboards are damaged for example, then only replace the damaged area – not the entire wall.

3.5 Carefully select material replacements for historic buildings.

- Synthetic materials, such as vinyl siding, is strongly discouraged. Synthetic materials can adversely affect the authenticity of the historic district and does not always last longer than natural materials that are maintained.

3.6 Covering original building materials with new materials is strongly discouraged.

New material layered on top of historic material traps moisture between the two layers which increases the rate of deterioration of the historic material.

3.7 Remove non-historic layers that cover the original material.

- Once the non-historic material is removed, repair the original material.

Sand blasting is typically a last resort to remove paint as it typically takes the protective coating off the masonry.

Consider a poultice to remove paint from masonry and wood.

Always use biodegradable or environmentally-safe cleaning or paint removal products.



Match wood siding and decorative features when replacement is necessary.



Avoid covering original material with vinyl synthetic materials.



Remove vinyl siding to reveal the original wood material as shown here.



Remove material that covers historic storefronts as shown at left.

Porches and Stoops

Many of Rochester's residential historic buildings have front, side and/or rear porches or stoops. This popular 19th century feature protects the front door from weather, defines the entry, and provides a sense of scale. Oftentimes the style of the porch enhanced the architecture of the building. The repetition of porches along a street creates a sense of place within the historic district and defines public and private realms. A porch connects a house to its context by defining the entry. This philosophy applies to stoops as well.

Many historic buildings have steps to a small landing, referred to as a stoop, instead of a front porch. Most of the stoop steps in Rochester are cast stone which is a fancy of saying that concrete was poured into a decorative form as a substitute for natural stone. Overtime cast stone is subject to spalling, cracking and breaking due mostly to settling of the building, water damage, and use.

Porches and stoops are character defining features within the Historic Overlay District that by their very nature are exposed to the elements more than other aspects of a building. Because of the constant exposure to moisture, wind and sun, a maintenance plan is highly recommended to maintain these important features.

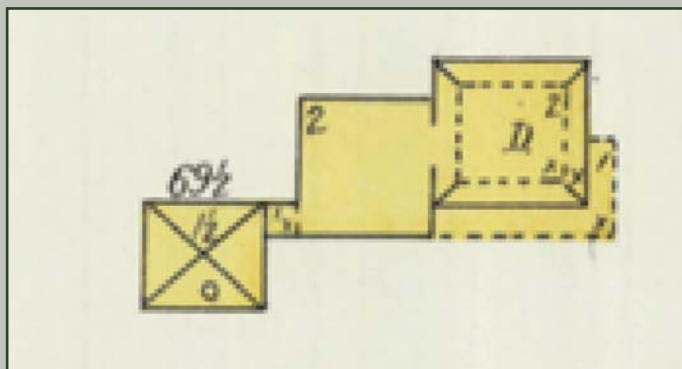
Side note: The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps accurately document historic building footprints, including porches, in Rochester from 1887 – 1908. Digital maps are available in the Dartmouth Library archives.

3.8 Preserve an original porch or stoop.

- Repair deteriorated materials where possible.
- Replace elements that cannot be repaired by matching the replacement in material, design, scale, color and finish.
- Use photographic documentation or the historic Sanborn maps when available to ensure accurate reconstruction of a porch or stoop.
- Expanding the size of a historic porch or adding new entryways is strongly discouraged.

3.9 Regular maintenance of historic porches and stoops is strongly encouraged.

- Painting porches and stoops that were historically painted protects the underlying material. However, ensure a smooth application- chipped or missing paint becomes a shelf for water to sit which increases deterioration.
- Remove paint build up prior to a new coat of paint to ensure a smooth application.
- Direct water away from front porches and stoops by installing gutters and gently sloped landscaping with positive drainage.
- Fill cracks in cast stone steps with an appropriate flexible sealant and possible backer rods to prevent water from entering the cracks and causing more deterioration.



Historic Sanborn Map footprint of the Emily Cross House.
Courtesy the Dartmouth Library Archives.

Example of 1908 footprint and historic building. The dotted line indicates the front porch. The building photo is below.



The Emily Cross House with original front porch as shown on the 1908 footprint above.

3.10 Avoid removing or enclosing a historic porch or stoop.

- Enclosing a historic porch or stoop changes the proportions and scale of the historic building and is strongly discouraged.
- If enclosing a porch or stoop is unavoidable, design the enclosure to not damage historic materials or character. For example, use large sheets of glass that are recessed behind existing posts and balustrades.
- Reopening an enclosed porch is strongly encouraged.

3.11 If new handrails or guardrails are required design them to be in scale with the porch or stoop.

- A simple metal railing is suggested.
- Where possible, attach the railing to new construction or fix it to the ground to avoid permanently damaging the porch or stoop.
- The railing should be in scale with the steps of the porch or stoop and not wider or skinner.



The original front stoop is a character defining features.



A simple painted wood handrail on the outside of the stoop does not detract from the design or damage historic material.



A simple metal handrail is an appropriate solution.



A more elaborate handrail that relates to the character of the building may be appropriate in some cases.

Windows and Doors

Windows are some of the most important features of historic structures. They provide visual interest to a façade, a sense of scale to a building and oftentimes convey the historic use of the different floors of a building. Windows offer insight into how the building was originally used. The earliest windows had small areas of glass held in place with lead, metal or wood. As window technology progressed glass increased in size and windows became operable with counterbalanced pulley systems. Lintels and sills are important to the character and style of the building and should be preserved.

Doors are also important to the overall appearance of a historic building façade. From full glass doors to completely solid doors, Rochester has a mix of door styles that add to the visual interest and variety of the Historic District. It is important to preserve original windows and doors where possible, and to not change the size of the original opening.

In some cases, owners may be concerned that an older window is inefficient and contributes to energy loss. For example, in the winter heat loss through gaps in a window may increase heating costs and create an uncomfortable drafty room. Most heat loss through windows and doors results from gaps and cracks and not through the pane of glass. Gaps can be addressed through the installation of a storm window or storm door, or weather stripping rather than replacing the historic windows. Storm windows and doors were used historically to regulate interior temperatures, and are generally appropriate on Rochester's historic buildings when installed properly.

Original windows and doors add an authenticity to the Historic District that cannot be replicated with new construction. Properly maintained windows and doors will continue to function and to contribute to the character of the Historic District for future generations.



Historic Sanborn maps often identify window locations.
Courtesy Dartmouth Library Archives.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps delineate the number of windows on a brick building façade using hatches, including which windows had shutters.

3.12 Preserve historic windows and doors.

- Preserve the position, number and arrangement of windows and doors in a building wall.
- Restore original openings using physical evidence on the building, historic maps, or photographs.
- Repair sashes and frames, using the historic pane of glass when possible, rather than replacing the entire window.
- Install storm windows and doors, or weather stripping, to address gaps rather than replacing the entire window or door. Interior storm windows are preferred; however exterior storm windows are acceptable.
- Historic hardware, for example decorative door knobs, should be preserved.
- Use transparent glass instead of tinted glass in commercial storefronts.



Character defining windows add interest to a façade.



Storm doors are an appropriate solution to avoid replacing a historic door.

3.13 Regular maintenance of historic windows and doors is strongly encouraged.

- Fill window openings with glass, and repair broken glass, to prevent weather from entering the building and causing deterioration.
- Limit cleaning of masonry lintels and sill only when necessary to remove heavy soiling or to slow deterioration.
- Paint windows and doors that were historically painted to protect the underlying material. However, ensure a smooth application - chipped or missing paint becomes a shelf for water to sit which increases deterioration.
- Windows should be operable and functional.
- Remove paint build up to allow a window to open rather than replacing the window.
- Remove paint build up prior to a new coat of paint to ensure a smooth application.

3.14 When replacing windows and doors is unavoidable, preserve the size and proportion of the historic openings, lintels and sill where applicable.

- Avoid altering the width of a door unless required to comply with ADA requirements.
- Avoiding adding new window openings and new doors to a historic building. If unavoidable, limit new window openings and doors to secondary and rear facades.

3.15 When replacing an original window or door, match material and style to the original.

- Carefully consider the profile of the replacement window or door to match the original or to be consistent with the style of the building.
- Select door and window hardware, for example a door knob, that is related to the style of the building and the scale of the door.



Character defining windows add authenticity to the District.

Be careful to not paint windows shut.



At bottom left the ground floor windows were bricked in and painted black which creatively maintains the visual repetition of "windows" on this facade.



A smaller window frame was fit into a large historic window opening creating a gap at the top that was filled in with painted wood.

Architectural Details

Architectural Details establish a distinct character to a historic building that resonates throughout the Historic District. Adding visual interest as well as creating a sense of scale, architectural details showcased superior craftsmanship indicative of Rochester's 19th century buildings. Architectural details may be ornate or simple, both of which contribute to the historic character of the building and to the Historic District. Preservation of the original feature is preferred as it is more authentic than a replica which typically is machine made and lacks a handmade quality.



Architectural details are found throughout the District.

3.16 Preserve significant architectural features. Repair deteriorated features when necessary.

- Patch, piece in, or consolidate to repair the existing materials when possible to avoid replacement.
- Document architectural features and location prior to disassembly or repair using photographs and measurements to ensure accurate restoration and placement.

3.17 Regular maintenance of architectural features is recommended.

- Use gutters and other means to divert water away from architectural details.
- Paint architectural features that were historically painted to protect the underlying material. However, ensure a smooth application - chipped or missing paint becomes a shelf for water to sit which increases deterioration.
- Remove paint build up prior to a new coat of paint to ensure a smooth application.
- Stabilize architectural features that are not solidly attached to the building.

3.18 Do not guess at historic design for replacement parts.

- Where scars on the exterior suggest that architectural features existed, but there is no other physical or photographic evidence, then new features may be designed in a simplified version of the architectural details found on buildings of the same style.



High level craftsmanship needs special attention.



Curved detailed columns are important features to preserve.



Gutters on Wakefield St. positively direct water away from the resource.



Character defining architectural details on City Hall.

Roofs

The form and style of a roof defines a historic building. The size, color, pattern and details are integral to the historic significance of a building. In addition to visual and architectural significance, a roof is a mandatory design element for any building to protect the building system from weather. Maintenance of a roof is essential to the long term viability of a historic building. Wood was historically the most common roof material in the 19th century and would have been found throughout Rochester. The roof is the structure's main line of defense against environmental impacts. Overtime, many wood shingle roofs were replaced with asphalt shingles or metal.

Rochester has an impressive range of roof forms and details that are important to the character of the building and the Historic District. Roof pitch, materials, dimension, and orientation of historic buildings create a cohesive Historic District that represents typical building styles of the 19th century. Commercial and civic buildings in Rochester typically had flat roofs, and residential and religious buildings had single or multiple pitched roofs, cupolas, and steeples.

3.19 Preserve the original form of a roof.

- Altering the slope of a historic roof as seen from the street is discouraged.
- Retain and repair original roof detailing such as roof cresting is encouraged.
- Restoring the original roof form of a building using historic photographs or other evidence is strongly encouraged.
- Parapets, dormers, and cornices are important roof characteristics that should not be altered or covered.
- Stabilize and repair historic chimneys, even when they are not functional.

3.20 Regular maintenance of a roof is strongly encouraged.

- Repair and patch any missing roof material to ensure an airtight roof.
- Paint or stain a roof that was historically painted to protect the underlying material. However, ensure a smooth application- chipped or missing paint becomes a shelf for water to sit which increases deterioration.
- Regularly clean roof gutters and downspouts to avoid backups.
- Replace deteriorated flashing.
- Regularly inspect roof membranes on flat roof buildings to ensure that the roof covering is waterproof and sound.



Gable roof with church steeple.



Gable roof and almost flat secondary roof forms.



Gable roof dormer windows typical to residential buildings.



Typical flat roof forms found on downtown commercial buildings.

3.21 New or replacement roof materials should be similar in scale, color and texture to the historic roof where possible.

- Roof material should be earth tone and non-reflective.
- New material should have proven durability in Rochester's climate.
- Flashing should be in scale with the roof material and be designed to not cover historic details.
- Flashing should be earth tone and non-reflective to blend in with the roof material.

2.22 Avoid adding roof details on historic buildings that did not historically exist such as cupolas, roof cresting, or parapets.

- Adding these features creates a false sense of history that degrades the authenticity of the Historic District.

Unless there is historic evidence to the contrary, gutters and downspouts should be located at corners of a building and should avoid covering architectural details where possible.

Select gutter and downspout materials that are in character with the building such as copper.



Flashing detail at the porch roof stands out against the brick facade, but is important waterproofing.



A gable roof was presumably added atop the parapet of a flat roof commercial building.



A non-historic modest three story access tower is lower than the ridge which does not compete with the historic cupola.



Original gable roof that has since been covered with a flat roof facade.

Landscape, Streetscape, and Other Features

Rochester has a historically significant and unique arched bridge that was built in the early 1880s by Silas Hussey Jr. and highlights Rochester's important heritage. Granite curbs with decorative caps are found in the Historic District that define public and private spaces. Historically street trees created a canopy down Wakefield Street that created a sense of place for the Historic District.

3.23 Preserve mature trees and important street features when possible.

- Prune trees and hedges away from historic building facades to allow air flow.
- For properties along Wakefield Street, add street trees indigenous to Rochester to recreate the historic tree canopy.



Large trees and a direct walkway frame the building.

3.24 Preserve granite curbs and caps when possible.

- Reuse these features along the streetscape in their original placement or a similar placement.



Granite curbs and repetitive street trees create a walkable and pedestrian friendly District.

3.25 Preserve original fences, bridges and walls.

- Replace only the portions that are severely deteriorated and beyond repair.
- Increasing the height of a wall, bridge, or fence is discouraged.
- Painting a wall or bridge that was not historically painted is discouraged.

3.26 Carefully place plants to not obstruct architectural features.

- Consider the mature size of a plant when selecting a location to avoid a future conflict with the building.



The historic bridge defines one end of the Historic District.



Historic fence found on Central Square.



Large bushes frame the entryway but may block ground level windows.



A window box with flowers adds interest to the street.



This historic 19th century building has rear additions that blend into the original footprint and style of the building.

Goal: Reuse and add to existing buildings within the Historic Overlay District to breathe new life into Rochester’s buildings and to reinvigorate the downtown.

Applicability

This chapter applies to building additions, both attached and detached, and remodels located on already developed properties within the Historic Overlay District. Note: New primary building on vacant lots and/or large scale buildings are also subject to Chapter 6. Consult with Rochester Planning Staff to determine the applicable Chapter for the scope of your project.

Purpose

Designing an addition or remodel to relate to the existing buildings on a property and to fit within the Historic Overlay District requires careful thought. These projects should be designed in a manner that is secondary and subordinate to the primary building while being a product of its own time. Rochester’s Historic Overlay District has a range of buildings types, styles and site planning that encourages creative small scale projects that relate to and highlight this irreplaceable heritage. The variety of downtown requires analysis of the existing buildings on the property to identify character defining features, if any, to highlight in the new addition or remodel. Additions to historic buildings within the District should not negatively affect the historic character of the building on the property or within the block.

Quick Reference Guide

- Existing Additions
- Building Placement
- Parking
- Architecture
- Building Proportion, Scale and Height
- Street Level Design and Commercial Storefronts
- Architectural Details, Materials and Color
- Accessibility, Lighting, Mechanical and Service Areas

Existing Additions



Historic additions from a time period similar to the original home should be preserved.

Many buildings were expanded over time to address changing uses, needs and systems such as air conditioners. Before incorporating demolition into your project, examine these additions to determine if there is any historic significance. Existing additions may have historic significance depending on the time period of construction or its association with an important person to local, state or national history. The majority of recent additions have no historic significance and in many cases detract from the original building. Removing non-historic additions is encouraged.

4.1 Inspection of existing additions prior to removal is strongly encouraged.

- A more recent addition that is not historically significant may be demolished.
- Preserve an older addition that has local, state or national importance.
- Carefully remove non-historic additions to avoid damaging the existing building.

Building Placement



A second story rear addition is cantilevered over the parking area.

The placement of additions not only impact the existing buildings on the property, but greatly impact development patterns and rhythms found along the streetscape within the Historic District. Locating an addition to the rear or significantly setback from the front façade maintains the repetition of buildings and pedestrian oriented characteristics along the street and is consistent with historic development patterns.

4.2 Preserve historic alignment within the block and neighborhood.

- Locating an addition at the rear of an existing building is highly recommended.
- When designing a side addition, setting it back from the front facade of the building is strongly suggested.
- A rooftop addition on a flat roof building should be setback from street facing facades to preserve the original profile of the historic building, if applicable. A setback distance of about 5-10 feet from building edge is suggested.
- Consider attaching an addition to a section of the building that is already altered by a non-historic addition or by exterior alterations for example.

Parking

Parking is an important and necessary characteristic of a commercial downtown that was not considered in the 19th century. Parking is vital to a healthy commercial neighborhood which requires careful placement and planning to not detract from the pedestrian experience while simultaneously being convenient and accessible. Parking in front of a building creates a confusing and sometimes unsafe pedestrian experience that discourages walking, outdoor dining, and window shopping – all characteristics associated with healthy commercial downtowns.



Parking at the rear of the property in a small garage is an appropriate solution.



Parking at the rear of a historic building hides cars from the street.

4.3 When additional parking is required as part of an addition or remodel project, locate parking areas at the rear of a property where possible.

- Consolidate parking on the property or with other nearby properties when possible.
- Providing streetscape elements such as street trees, low fencing or planter boxes is strongly recommended to shield the parking area and reinforce property lines if parking is located adjacent to a street.

Architecture

There is a range of historic building types within the Historic Overlay District that range from traditional late 19th century commercial buildings to elaborate residences to stately civic and religious buildings. It is important to protect and enhance the different types of buildings. These buildings tell the story of Rochester which historically had commercial uses and taller buildings in the Central Square that stepped down in scale, height and incorporated residential characteristics such as front porches as development moved away from the downtown.

An addition or remodel should not adversely affect the architectural character of the Historic Overlay District. Where applicable, the overall design of an addition to a historic building should highlight and support the historic building, but remain distinguishable from the historic portion. A remodel project or addition to a non-historic building within the District should draw on traditional architecture characteristics to relate to the historic context. Fake 19th century architecture and unrelated contemporary architecture is detrimental to the historic character of the District and is generally not appropriate. Additions and remodels that reference but do not replicate these important features contribute and support the historic buildings, sense of place and authenticity of the District.



A small side addition at left is set back from the front facade.



The second story cantilever distinguishes new from old construction.

4.4 Design an addition to be recognized as a product of its own time.

- An addition should be compatible and subordinate to the existing building.
- An addition to a historic building should be a simplified version of the existing architectural character of the building.
- For historic properties, the primary building is to be visually dominant on the site and distinguishable from the addition.
- Avoid replicating a historic building. A new addition should not be a knock-off of the original building.

4.5 Consider historic context when designing a remodel project.

- For historic properties, contemporary siding, such as vinyl, oftentimes cover original wood siding or details. Investigate the exterior of a historic building to find clues to inform an accurate remodel project.
- For non-historic properties, relate to surrounding historic context by enlarging a storefront or adding an architectural projection similar to adjacent historic buildings.
- Avoid guessing or imitating historic character which creates a false sense of history within the District.

4.6 Designing an addition to a historic building that does not obscure or destroy historically important architectural features is strongly recommended.

- Loss or alteration of architectural details, cornices, or eave lines for example should be avoided where possible.
- These historic details are irreplaceable and should be preserved where possible.
- A removable or “reversible” addition that could be removed in the future without significant damage to the historic building is preferred.

Building Proportion, Scale and Height

A variety of building heights and widths reflect traditional 19th century development patterns in Rochester. A well scaled addition that relates to the existing building positively contributes to the Historic District. Addition and remodel projects offer great opportunities to refresh downtown and to showcase Rochester's range of architecture and the evolution of development downtown.

4.7 Design an addition to be compatible in height and scale to the primary building.

- An addition that is lower in height or a similar height to the existing building is preferred.
- For additions that are taller than the existing building, a significant setback from street facing facades is strongly recommended to reduce visual impacts on the primary building.

4.8 Simple rectangular forms with a flat or gable roof are appropriate.

- Roof forms should be compatible with the existing building.
- Overly complicated roof forms may distract from the existing building and neighborhood and are discouraged.
- Solar panels may be appropriate on non-street facing facades. Solar panels should be aligned with the pitch of the roof.



Roof form changes create a clear separation between new and old construction



A subtle material color change and eliminating brick details differentiate between the historic building and the rear addition.



Solar panels are at the rear of the historic property and are flush with the pitch of the gable roof to reduce visual impacts.



A one story rear addition with gable roof does not distract from the original form and details of the historic building.

Street-level Design and Commercial Storefronts

Street level design directly contributes to the walkability, vitality and success of a vibrant downtown. The historic buildings in the Central Square exhibit the rhythm of recessed entryways and prominent commercial storefronts that are integral to the character of Rochester's historic downtown. The repetition of these features provide a human scale that is inviting to pedestrians and creates visual interest. Historic commercial storefronts were traditionally constructed of wood, various types of metal, brick or stone, and large expanses of glass.

Street level design in the areas outside of Central Square is equally important to create a sense of place through the repetition of a consistent front setback, prominent entry door and pedestrian scaled elements such as front porches and simple fences. The scale of these new elements should reflect historic buildings and properties within the District.



Main entries facing Main Street.



The library addition addresses Main Street from the rear of the property.



A main entry facing Main Street with traditional front porch.

4.9 Additions or remodels to commercial buildings should include a clearly defined primary entrance at sidewalk level, facing the front lot line and oriented to the street.

- Where feasible, a corner lot should have a minimum of two entrances; a primary entrance facing the primary street and a secondary entrance facing the side street. Entrance through a chamfered corner may be appropriate on a corner lot.
- A walkway perpendicular to the sidewalk is strongly recommended for properties with a front setback to define the primary entrance and to support a pedestrian friendly streetscape.
- Consider the context of the block and adjacent historic buildings when placing a primary entrance to repeat the rhythm established in the neighborhood.



Historic storefronts with recessed commercial entries.

4.10 Entry doors and storefront windows should reflect the traditional scale found in historic buildings within the block.

- Oversized or undersized entry doors detract from the pedestrian oriented characteristics of the historic District and are strongly discouraged.
- Relate the proportions of a remodeled storefront to surrounding historic buildings. For example, minimize the height of the kickplate beneath the storefront windows similar to the traditional 19th century commercial storefront in the Central Square.

4.11 Street level windows that reflect historic patterns within the block is encouraged.

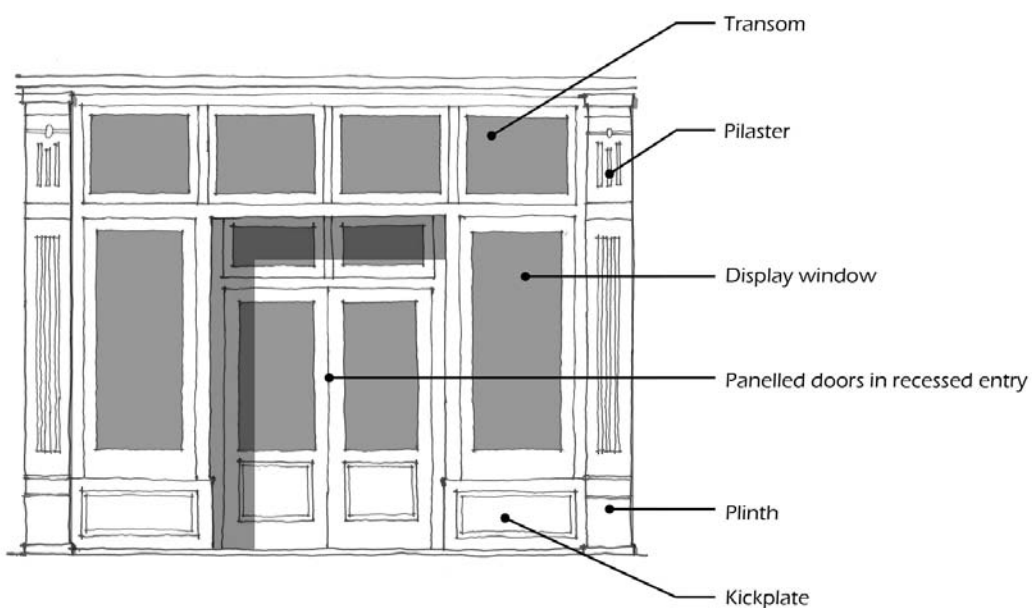
- Utilize existing openings where possible in a re-model project and select window sizes that fill the entire opening.
- Reestablish windows where they have been removed on a building façade.
- Design additions to relate to the window patterns found on the existing building.
- Use transparent glass instead of tinted glass for commercial storefronts.



Historic photograph of the bank at the corner of Main and Wakefield Streets.



Current photograph with filled in storefront.



Storefront terminology.

Architectural Details , Materials, and Color

Building materials and architectural details in the Historic Overlay District strongly reflect traditional 19th century New England characteristics. Architectural details and materials tie an addition to an existing building; however; it is important to make subtle reference to these details without creating a false sense of history. Material dimension and treatment are a subtle approach to differentiate between new and old construction that is appropriate in many cases.

4.12 Simplify architectural details in addition and remodel projects to relate and not imitate the historic buildings in the District.

- A simple storefront cornice is suggested for remodeled commercial buildings in Central Square.
- Trim, molding and other 3-dimensional elements should be modest and subordinate in character to relate, and not compete, with the historic building where applicable.

4.13 Wood, brick, stone, and metal are recommended primary building materials.

- Use building materials found within the block to relate to historic context.
- Materials that convey a human scale and have proven durability and weathering characteristics in Rochester's climate are suggested alternatives to traditional wood, brick, stone and metal.
- Consider traditional treatment of materials and textures when selecting materials. For example, wood is typically horizontal lap siding and painted. To differentiate between the historic building and new construction, a different dimension of horizontal wood siding or a wood stain finish may be appropriate.

4.14 Similar window sizes, shapes and styles to the existing building and historic context is encouraged.

- Look to the window types in the existing building to inform window selection.
- An accent window that differentiates the addition as new construction may be appropriate.

4.15 Neutral paint colors are recommended.

- Painting the addition a different shade of the primary building color is appropriate in some cases as long as the paint color does not distract from the primary building.
- Highlight architectural details with contrasting paint colors where appropriate.



Paint colors highlight architectural details.



Simple painted wood siding for the rear addition is appropriate.



Vertical window shapes that are similar to the historic building are shown on the rear addition.

Accessibility, Lighting, Mechanical and Services Areas

The passage of the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act in 1990 mandated that places of public accommodation be made accessible to everyone. The International Building Code (IBC) specifies accessibility requirements based on use, occupancy and building type. Sensitive solutions to meet accessibility requirements are important to the historic character of the District and to making Rochester's heritage available to everyone.

Lighting is integral to nighttime appearance of the District and an overall feeling of safety for pedestrians at night. It is important to balance the character and intensity of lighting within the District to highlight commercial businesses and architectural features while not being overpowering.

Mechanical areas, trash areas, and utilities can add unsightly clutter to the District. When placed at the rear of a property or screened from the street, these necessary areas can blend into the background of a property.

4.16 Accessible ramps that relate to the historic character of the building and District are preferred.

- Simple ramp materials and railings that do not distract from the architecture are recommended.
- Landscaping around the ramp is suggested to integrate the feature into the property.
- Providing the highest level of access with the least amount of alteration to the characterizing defining features of a historic building is strongly recommended.

4.17 Simple light fixtures and traditional location of lighting within the District are recommended.

- Light fixtures are encouraged to be placed adjacent to entrances.
- Lighting may be used to highlight architectural details, such as a church steeple or decorative cornice, where appropriate.
- Refer to Chapter 6: Signage for lighting related to signs.

4.18 Where possible, place services areas, utilities, and trash at the rear of a property.

- Screen mechanical equipment and trash that is visible from the street with simple fencing or landscaping.
- Consider placing utilities on non-street facing facades where possible to avoid detracting from the architectural features.

4.19 Consider placing window air conditioning units on non-street facing facades where possible.

- Removing window air conditioning units during cooler months is recommended.



A simple ramp at the Rochester Historical Society.



Some light fixtures may distract from architectural features.



Place AC units on non-street facing facades.



Screen trash areas from view.



Place utilities at the rear of the property on non-street facing facades.



View of church steeple from Central Square.

Goal: New buildings introduce creative design solutions that are inspired by and highlight Rochester’s 19th century historic buildings and development patterns.

Applicability

This chapter applies to entirely new buildings located within the Historic Overlay District. Note: additions, remodels and small secondary buildings, such as garages, on already developed parcels are subject to Chapter 3.

Purpose

Designing a new building to fit within the Historic Overlay District requires careful thought. A new building should be designed in a manner that reinforces the significant historic characteristics of the neighborhood context. Rochester’s Historic Overlay District has a range of buildings types, styles and site planning that encourages creative new buildings that relate to and highlight this irreplaceable heritage. The variety of downtown requires careful study of the historic context before designing a new building to fit within the District.

Applicants are encouraged to consider Rochester’s iconic downtown features into a project when designing a new building to highlight and not obstruct the following important characteristics:

- Visibility of the church steeples located at both 24 and 34 South Main Street.
- Respect and reinforce the Central Square “triangle” created by Main, Wakefield and Union Streets.
- Maintain a visual and physical connection to the Cocheco River and the historic arched bridge for properties that border the River.

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Building Placement

A clearly delineated street edge is important in the Central Square Neighborhood located on North Main Street between Portland and Union Streets because it supports commercial use on the ground floor, encourages pedestrian activity and high quality commercial storefronts, and aligns with traditional development patterns that set large commercial buildings on the property line. Historically there was limited open space in the Central Square Neighborhood with the exception of civic and religious buildings, and some residences. Corner lots in the Central Square require sensitive placement of a new building that defines the corner and strengthens the street wall.

The historic neighborhoods to the north and south of Central Square, along South Main Street, Union Street, Wakefield Street, and Hanson Street, have a different setting and context that includes front yards, perpendicular walkways from the sidewalk to the street, and limited commercial storefronts. There is more generous open space and space between buildings in these neighborhoods, and corner lots have significant setbacks with buildings facing the primary street.

5.1 Orient a new building to the street.

- All buildings should be parallel to the lot lines in order to reinforce Rochester's development pattern.
- Generally do not set a structure forward of any historic resource within the block.
- Buildings on corner lots should orient toward the primary Street (either Main Street or Wakefield Street).

5.2 Maintain alignment of facades within the block and neighborhood.

- In the Central Square, at least 50% of the first floor building façade is recommended to be placed at the property line.
- In the Central Square, corner lots require special care to align facades at both street facing property lines especially when the property is located on the "triangle."
- In the rest of the historic District, facades should be aligned with the rest of the historic buildings within the block to reinforce historic development patterns.



The Rochester Library and addition face Main Street.



Building facade alignment In Central Square looking down Main Street.



Front yard looking down Main Street.



Church steeple is a focal point when travelling down Main Street.

Parking is an important and necessary characteristic of a commercial downtown that was not considered in the 19th century. Parking is vital to a healthy commercial neighborhood which requires careful placement and planning to not detract from the pedestrian experience while simultaneously being convenient and accessible. Parking in front of a building creates a confusing and sometimes unsafe pedestrian experience that discourages walking, outdoor dining, and window shopping – all characteristics associated with healthy commercial downtowns.



Parking at the rear of the building.



The hedgerow defines the property line and blocks views into the parking lot.



A close up photograph of the hedgerow above.

5.3 Locate parking areas at the rear of a property where possible.

- Consider consolidating parking lots with other properties or municipal lots in the area where feasible.
- Limit the size of the curb cut to minimize asphalt in front and around a building throughout the District.
- Parking areas in front of a building is strongly discouraged throughout the District, especially in the Central Square.

5.4 Streetscape elements that reinforce the property line and block views into a street facing parking area is strongly encouraged.

- Planter boxes, street trees, or an art installation to define the property line and to block views of the parking lot are suggested.

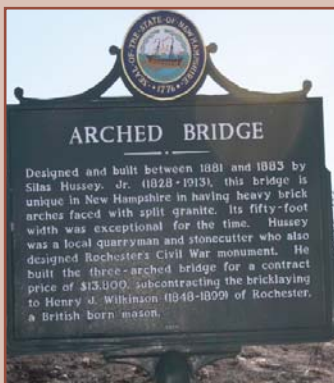
Architecture

There is a range of historic building types within the Historic Overlay District that range from traditional late 19th century commercial buildings to elaborate residences to stately civic and religious buildings. It is important to protect and enhance the different types of buildings. These buildings tell the story of Rochester which historically had commercial uses and taller buildings in the Central Square that stepped down in scale, height and incorporated residential characteristics such as front porches as development moved away from the downtown.

The primary historic buildings that define the Central Square were traditional late 19th century commercial buildings between two and four stories in height. A mix of simple rectangular forms with either flat or gable roofs were the dominant form. Commercial storefronts with recessed entryways at ground level and large expanses of glass to display goods were common. Upper floors were expressed through smaller windows resulting in a balanced ratio of wall to window along the façade. The typical commercial building form and architecture of this era was vertical, or taller than it is wide. These features are important to reference in new buildings within the Central Square and in blocks such as Hanson Street with large 19th century commercial buildings.

Historic neighborhoods around the Central Square have a range of architecture. Historic maps show these areas as more residential in character with front porches, pitched roofs and lower building heights. There are commercial, civic and religious buildings in this area as well that transition Rochester's historic development from the dense tall commercial downtown to the typical residential and mixed use architecture that is generally lower in height with smaller windows and more architectural projections to the north and south.

Imitation faux 19th century architecture and unrelated contemporary architecture is detrimental to the historic character of the District and is generally not appropriate. New buildings that reference but do not replicate these important features contribute and support the historic buildings, sense of place and authenticity of the District.





Traditional historic buildings on Main Street.



Different window placement between the first and upper floors.



Smaller window openings in a historically residential building.



View corridor of the church steeple from Main and Union Streets.



View corridor of church steeple looking down Main toward Central Square.



View corridor of church steeple from Central Square.

5.5 Development should be inspired by traditional late 19th century buildings found within the block to create a cohesive Historic Overlay District.

- Design that emphasizes vertical elements is recommended in the Central Square.
- Residential elements such as front porches, dormers, and gable roofs are appropriate in most areas outside the Central Square.

5.6 Maintain an architectural distinction between the street level and upper floors.

- A hierarchy of window sizes and shapes that are large at street level and smaller on the upper floors is encouraged for commercial buildings in the Central Square.
- A floor to ceiling height of 9 to 12 feet for the first floor and 9 feet for upper floors is strongly recommended for commercial buildings in the Central Square.
- An upper floor that is equal to or shorter in height to the ground level is strongly recommended in areas outside the Central Square.

5.7 Design a new building to be recognized as a product of its own time.

- Imitation of older historic styles blurs the line between new and old buildings which may detract from the authenticity of the District.
- Rehabilitating or accurately reconstructing a historic building based on historic documents and photographs is strongly encouraged.

5.8 Important view corridors within the Central Square neighborhood should be considered.

- The historic Methodist Church steeple on the Central Square is an iconic feature of Rochester that should remain visible when travelling down Wakefield and Main Streets.
- The view from Central Square to the historic arched bridge at the end of North Main Street is an iconic feature of Rochester that should be highlighted and not obstructed in new development if possible.

Building Proportion, Scale and Height

A variety of building heights and widths reflect traditional 19th century development patterns in Rochester. Some of the buildings in the Central Square neighborhood spanned more than one lot; however the scale and the width were broken into smaller masses with multiple storefronts at street level and deliberate window placement on upper floors to create a cohesive building that relates to, and interacts with, the pedestrian at ground level. Outside the Central Square buildings had a smaller footprint and architectural projections and details, such as front porches, decorative trim, bay windows, and dormers that broke down mass rather than the traditional commercial storefronts.

5.9 New buildings should be a minimum of 2 stories in height.

- A building that is taller than it is wide is recommended for building that are less than 30 feet wide.
- Break up large building façades in the Central Square with multiple smaller storefronts at ground level and architectural elements that emphasize verticality.
- One story building are generally not appropriate and are considered on a case by case basis depending on surrounding context.
- Building setbacks, height variation, changes of material, and architectural details may be appropriate techniques to vertically divide a building into modules.
- A new building should avoid negative impacts on a smaller historic buildings by stepping down in height or scale.

5.10 Height variation within a block is important to create visual interest and to reflect historic building height ranges.

- New building height should be sensitive to adjacent iconic historic buildings and features, such as church steeples, and not block these important views.
- Height variation can be achieved through the use of architectural elements such as a cornice or a parapet.
- Height variation should be a minimum of 15 feet wide.
- In the Central Square neighborhood, and in areas where there is a strong street wall, a minimum building height difference of 2 feet from immediately adjacent buildings is recommended.

5.11 Simple rectangular forms with a flat or gable roof are appropriate.

- Flat roof forms are most appropriate on buildings that are more than two stories in height.
- A gable roof is most appropriate on a one or two story building.
- Flat roof forms on one story buildings are discouraged.
- Solar panels may be appropriate on non-street facing facades. Solar panels should be aligned with the pitch of the roof.



Height variation and diverse storefront design is found throughout the Central Square.



A range of building heights and storefront widths are evident.



Flat roof buildings are typical in Central Square.

Street-level Design and Commercial Storefronts

Street level design directly contributes to the walkability, vitality and success of a vibrant downtown. The historic buildings in the Central Square exhibit the rhythm of recessed entryways and prominent commercial storefronts that are integral to the character of Rochester's historic downtown. The repetition of these features provide a human scale that is inviting to pedestrians and creates visual interest. Historic commercial storefronts were traditionally constructed of wood, various types of metal, brick or stone, and large expanses of glass.

Street level design in the areas outside of Central Square is equally important to create a sense of place through the repetition of a consistent front setback, prominent entry door and pedestrian scaled elements such as front porches and simple fences. The scale of these new elements should reflect historic buildings and properties within the District.



Unique storefront design creates an interesting District.



Large storefront windows were typical throughout Rochester in the 19th century.



Historic storefront with recessed entry and large windows.



A clearly defined entry with walkway from the sidewalk is found throughout the District.



A large front porch creates an inviting entry that relates to other historic buildings in the District.

5.12 Commercial entrances should be at side-walk level, facing the front lot line and oriented to the street.

- A corner lot should have a minimum of two entrances; a primary entrance facing the primary street and a secondary entrance facing the side street. Entrance through a chamfered corner may be appropriate on a corner lot.

5.13 Clearly define the primary entrance to a new building.

- Recessed entries, 4 feet back from the front façade, are strongly recommended in the Central Square and in areas where there is a strong street wall.
- A front porch that is similar size and shape to historic buildings within the block is strongly recommended for new buildings outside the Central Square neighborhood.
- The front porch and front entrance should be functional and used as the primary means to access the building. A secondary entrance facing the rear is recommended for easy access from parking.
- A walkway perpendicular to the sidewalk is strongly recommended for properties with a front setback to define the primary entrance and to support a pedestrian friendly streetscape.

5.14 Entry doors should reflect the traditional scale found in historic buildings within the block.

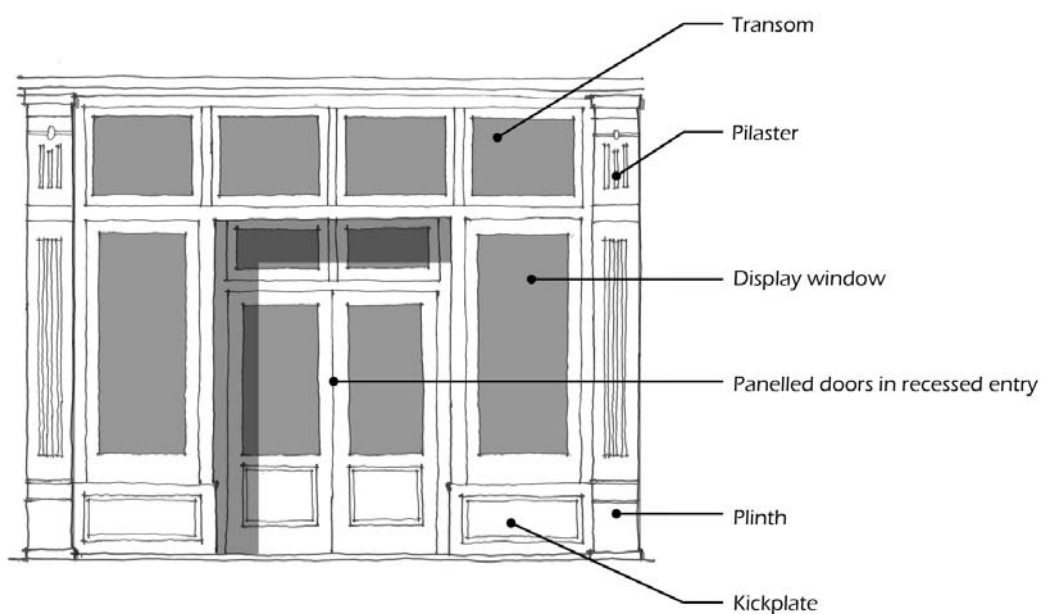
- Oversized or undersized entry doors detract from the pedestrian oriented characteristics of the historic District and are strongly discouraged.

5.15 Street level windows that reflect historic patterns within the block is encouraged.

- Predominately glass commercial storefronts at the street level with a tall kick plate are strongly recommended in the Central Square and in areas where there is a strong street wall. [show a kick plate that is too tall at one wakefield and one with traditional dimension at Hanson St.]
- In most cases street level windows should be taller and wider than on the upper floors.
- Blocking visual and physical access to street level commercial windows with planter boxes or other barriers is not recommended.
- Installing curtains or other non-permanent screening is recommended to provide privacy for non-retail businesses that does not detract from the pedestrian experience.



Decorative windows above the entry are an interesting historic detail that frame the entry.



Storefront terminology.

Architectural Details , Materials, and Color

Building materials and architectural details in the Historic Overlay District strongly reflect traditional 19th century New England characteristics. Architectural details and materials tie new buildings to the traditional development patterns found throughout the District to create a cohesive neighborhood that supports and highlights Rochester's heritage. It is important to make subtle reference to historic details in new buildings rather than imitating a historic building which creates a false sense of history. Character defining features of historic windows and their distinctive arrangement on a building wall should be preserved and used as inspiration for new buildings.

5.16 Align architectural details, such as a cornice, pediment or window lintel, with adjacent buildings to create continuity along the street.

- A storefront cornice is strongly recommended for commercial buildings in Central Square.
- Trim, molding and other 3-dimensional elements of a new building should be modest in character to relate, and not compete, with the historic context.



The cornices, storefronts and windows of the brick buildings are aligned.

5.17 Wood, brick, stone, and metal are recommended primary building materials.

- Use building materials found within the block to relate to historic context.
- Consider traditional treatment of materials and textures when selecting materials. For example, wood is typically painted and stone is generally unpainted.
- Roof materials should be similar in dimension and appearance to those used historically.



Horizontal siding and material changes differentiate between these two downtown buildings.

5.18 Careful selection of window sizes, shapes and styles is strongly encouraged.

- Upper floors windows should be taller than they are wide.
- Look to the range of window types in historic buildings within the block to inform window selection.

5.19 Carefully select colors that relate to the neighborhood.

- Neutral colors are preferred.
- Highlight architectural details with contrasting paint colors.



Use color to highlight architectural features.

5.20 A simple fence is recommended in areas outside the Central Square to define the street edge and frame a property.

- Fences should have a clear entrance and walkway to the primary door.
- Fences should be 42" or less in height.



A simple fence defines the street edge and frames the property.



A historic fence around Central Square adds texture to the District.



A range of building types, materials, and styles are found throughout the District.

Accessibility, Lighting, Mechanical and Services Areas

The passage of the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act in 1990 mandated that places of public accommodation be made accessible to everyone. The International Building Code (IBC) specifies accessibility requirements based on use, occupancy and building type. Sensitive solutions to meet accessibility requirements are important to the historic character of the District and to making Rochester's heritage available to everyone.

Lighting is integral to nighttime appearance of the District and an overall feeling of safety for pedestrians at night. It is important to balance the character and intensity of lighting within the District to highlight commercial businesses and architectural features while not being overpowering.

Mechanical areas, trash areas, and utilities can add unsightly clutter to the District. When placed at the rear of a property or screened from the street, these necessary areas can blend into the background of a property.

5.21 Accessibility should be designed into a new building to avoid ramps where possible.

Consider interior floor levels and grade changes within the landscape to avoid exterior ramps.

When a ramp is unavoidable, design the ramp to be consistent with architectural style of the primary building.

5.22 Basic light fixtures and traditional location of lighting within the District are recommended.

- Light fixtures are encouraged to be placed adjacent to entrances.
- Lighting may be used to highlight architectural details, such as a church steeple or decorative cornice, where appropriate.
- Refer to Chapter 6: Signage for lighting related to signs.

5.23 Where possible, locate services areas, utilities and trash at the rear of a property.

- Screen mechanical equipment and trash that is visible from the street with simple fencing or landscaping.
- Consider placing utilities on non-street facing facades where possible to avoid detracting from the architectural features.

5.24 Integrate heating and cooling systems into a new building to avoid window air conditioning units.



A street level entry at grade avoids ramps and provides accessibility.



A simple gooseneck light fixture lights a storefront.



A simple hanging sconce defines the entry.



A trash area located at the rear of a property and screened.



Signage should be creative and fun.

Goal: Creative signs that are distinct, artistic and appropriate within the context of the Historic District encourage a pedestrian friendly walkable downtown with a strong commercial presence.

Applicability

This chapter applies to the design and placement of all signs located within the Historic Overlay District. Sign content, specific words or messaging is not under the purview of the Historic District Commission.

Purpose

Well-designed creative signs encourage pedestrian traffic and animate downtown buildings. Signage is an important characteristic of a healthy downtown area; however out of scale signage can negatively detract from historic character. Signs that are scaled to the building and neighborhood add vibrancy and interest to pedestrians, residents and motorists. Awnings are a traditional 19th century commercial building feature that projected over the sidewalk and provided weather protection. Multiple awnings along the street create a sense of scale and separation from upper floors. Today's awnings in Rochester are generally not deep enough to provide weather protection and function more as signage. Generally signs in the Central Square are relatively small scaled due to limited building setbacks and traditional commercial storefronts. Signage progressively increases in size further away from Central Square.

Quick Reference Guide

Sign Type
Character
Placement and Preservation
Materials, Shape, and Color
Lighting

Sign Types



Window Sign: Window signs may be painted on, attached to, or suspended behind the window. The signage should be centered and not block the view into the establishment nor appear cluttered.



Wall Sign: Wall signs should be affixed to the building, parallel to the building with one face showing.



Projecting Sign: Projecting signs should be placed perpendicular to the building and should have two faces. Sign brackets should be made of painted wood or prefinished, pre-painted metal.



Awning Sign: Lettering should be placed on the front valance (the flap that hangs down from the awning) only. Awnings should be made of canvas material.



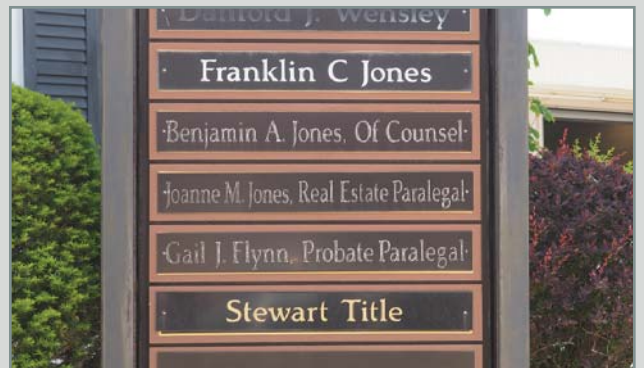
Roof Sign: Roofs signs are highly inappropriate, except on one story buildings where there are few other good locations for signage and the roof sign is integrated effectively into the design of the roof.



Freestanding Sign: Freestanding signs should be small in area, low in height, and supported by two wood, metal, or granite posts that, generally, and square in cross section. Larger signs should be set back.



Temporary Sign: Temporary signs containing any message, may be appropriate for new businesses or for seasonal events. Temporary signs are capped at 30 days.



Directory Sign: Directory signs are most appropriate for buildings with multiple tenants and should be made of wood or metal and scaled to the building. On masonry buildings directory signs should be attached to mortar joints to minimize scarring.

Character

Signs within the historic district should be significantly smaller than those situated on commercial corridors. They should be scaled and oriented to relate to pedestrians, as well as passing motorists.

Signs should be sized to the scale of the building, the storefront, and the street. Within the Historic District, Hanson Street and the block of North Main Street between Wakefield and Union Streets are relatively small scaled; Wakefield Street, Union Street, and North Main Street between Union Street and the bridge are medium scaled; and South Main Street is large scaled.

Generally, wall signs should not exceed one square foot in area for each linear foot of building frontage nor two feet in height. Generally, freestanding signs should not exceed ten square feet nor eight feet in height, though smaller signs are preferable. Most signs are rectangular. Wall signs are typically horizontal and projecting signs are typically vertical. Freestanding signs are more pedestrian oriented when they are small and vertical. Nonrectangular shapes add variety and interest and can be appropriate, but use of strange or highly irregular shapes, where not rationalized by the nature of the business, should be avoided. Use of changeable copy signs is allowed on a case by case basis. Where there is a need for changing advertising, portable signage may be a good solution.

6.1 A range of signage throughout the District is encouraged.

- Free-standing signs are appropriate outside the Central Square; but are discouraged within the Central Square due to conflicts with pedestrians and limited front yards.
- Consolidate signage for multiple businesses on one property into a directory where possible.
- Awning signs may be appropriate in the Central Square as long as the signage is located on the valence and the awnings project a minimum of 5 feet from the building façade.

- Sandwich board signs constructed of wood or chalkboard are recommended to create interest within the District.
- A retractable canvas, or canvas like, awning that projects from the building façade at least 5 feet may be appropriate.
- Awnings should have a valence and be open on all sides rather than closed.
- Temporary signs may be appropriate for a new business for a limited time.

6.2 Sign design that relates to the historic character of the building and the nature of the business is recommended.

- The scale of a sign should be proportional to the scale of the building.
- Sign placement that is sensitive to architectural details, materials, and traditional placement is encouraged.
- Generally, building mounted signs should not exceed an area equal to 25% of building frontage, with a minimum of 6 square feet. For example, a building with 60 feet of linear building frontage may have a sign that is 15 square feet in size. A building with 20 feet of linear building frontage may have sign that is 6 square feet.
- Generally, freestanding signs should not exceed ten square feet and eight feet in height.



Hanging sign with interesting shape.



Signage design that relates to the historic window shape.



A sandwich board sign adds pedestrian interest.

Placement and Preservation

Building mounted signs – including wall signs, projecting signs, awning signs, and canopy signs – should be located in the most appropriate location on the building. There is frequently a horizontal band or panel, or an open section on the wall which is clearly the most logical location for a sign.

Generally, the appropriate zone for signage, including the brackets for projecting signs, is above the storefront windows and below the sills under the second floor windows. It may be appropriate to place an understated wall sign identifying a building on the band under the cornice (uppermost crown) at the top of a multistory building.

Window signage on upper stories, advertising businesses located on the upper stories, is appropriate provided it is not overly prominent. Otherwise, signage placed above the second floor sills is discouraged, but may be approved if the design is suitably understated and is compatible with the building. Signs should be placed where they respect an existing sign line established by the signs on adjacent establishments.

Signs should not obscure any architectural features, including the windows, of the building. Wall signs should be affixed to the building, parallel to the building with one face showing. Roofs signs are highly inappropriate, except on one story buildings where there are few other good locations for signage and the roof sign is especially well crafted to integrate effectively into the design of the roof (such as on the Federal Savings Bank building, below).

6.3 Align signs with signage on adjacent properties to create a cohesive look within the District where possible.

- Awning signs should be high enough to provide safe passage by pedestrians below, and low enough to be placed beneath a storefront cornice.

6.4 Signs should be subordinate to the building design.

- Typically signage should be located above the first floor of the building and below the sills of second floor windows.
- Window wraps that fill an entire window with advertising detract from the building and the pedestrian experience and are strongly discouraged.
- Upper floor signage should be placed in windows.
- Rooftop signs are generally inappropriate in the District because they detract from the cornice line.
- Attach an awning above the storefront windows and below the storefront cornice. The awning should not span across masonry piers

and should fit over individual windows or door bays.

- Temporary signs may be placed in windows for a maximum of 30 days.

6.5 Signs that obscure or damage historic building fabric are strongly discouraged.

- Attach signs to a building carefully to not damage building material when the sign is removed.
- Reuse existing sign holes for future signs to avoid additional damage to the building.
- Abandoned sign holes should be filled.
- Mounting signs directly into mortar rather than masonry where possible and limiting the number of attachment points into the building are encouraged.

6.6 Preserve historic signs.

- Signs that indicate date of completion or the name of the building are important to the historic character of the District and should be protected.

Materials, Shape, and Color

Traditionally, the most attractive outdoor signs have generally been made of wood, mainly cedar, redwood and mahogany (though teak, cypress and others are sometimes used). These woods are dimensionally stable and resistant to rot and decay. They also hold paint and varnish well.

Various newer synthetic products achieve the desired look of hand-crafted traditional signage. Urethane, a synthetic material, is used increasingly. It is durable and easy to work, and, when painted, it resembles wood. Metal is also an appropriate material.

Materials should have a matte finish and not be reflective nor translucent. The following materials are inappropriate for signage in the Historic District: sheet plastic, plastic substrates, interior grade wood, and unfaced plywood. It is desirable that signs have a solid “feel” rather than a “plastic” feel.

Most signs are rectangular. Wall signs are typically horizontal and projecting signs are typically vertical. Freestanding signs are more pedestrian oriented when they are small and vertical. Nonrectangular shapes add variety and interest and can be appropriate, but use of strange or highly irregular shapes, where not rationalized by the nature of the business, should be avoided.

In general it is best to use no more than three colors on a sign: one for the background, one for the lettering, and a third color for accent (such as for borders, motifs, logos, or shading). A fourth color might be used for illustrations. Colors should be chosen to complement the color of the building.



Free standing sign with landscaping and simple lighting.



Simple cut out letters and gooseneck light fixtures.



Pictographic sign adds visual interest.

6.7 Suggested sign materials are wood, metal or synthetic.

- In general signs should be painted with a matte finish.
- Sheet plastic and plywood are examples of inappropriate sign materials that are foreign to the District and are discouraged.

6.8 A simple sign shape is desirable.

- Sign shape that reflects the business type is encouraged when balanced with the historic character of the District.
- A simple rectangular or circular sign is appropriate in most cases.
- Pictographic signs add visual interest to the street and are encouraged.

6.9 Contrasting sign colors are recommended. [note: a pre-approved color palette is found in the Rochester Planning Office].

- Limiting signs to four colors is suggested to not distract from the buildings within the District.
- Relating sign color to the building and nature of the business is encouraged to create a cohesive appearance.

Lighting is an important factor in a sign's character. Signs may be externally illuminated- lit by one or more shielded, stationery bulbs projecting onto the sign; internally illuminated- where a translucent-plastic sign is lit from the inside; or made with neon- exposed tubes filled with a gas that glows when electrified. Often street lights or other area lights provide sufficient lighting, such that the sign need not be lit at all.

Use of internal illumination is strongly discouraged and will generally not be approved. The plastic feel of internally illuminated signs is inappropriate in a historic district. In rare cases, like the Edward Jones sign, below, where the wattage is low and the sign is quite dark, internal illumination can be effective and would be acceptable. Neon is generally appropriate for interior window signage only.

Electronic message signs, for example flashing open signs, are not allowed.

6.10 Sign lighting should be simple in appearance.

- An exterior shielding light fixture shining directly onto the sign, such as a gooseneck light fixture, is strongly recommended.
- Signs with interior light sources, televisions, or electronic message signs create light pollution and are not allowed.
- Limit neon signs to interior storefront windows where possible.



A simple directional lighting at the wall.



A gooseneck lights attached to the hanging sign.

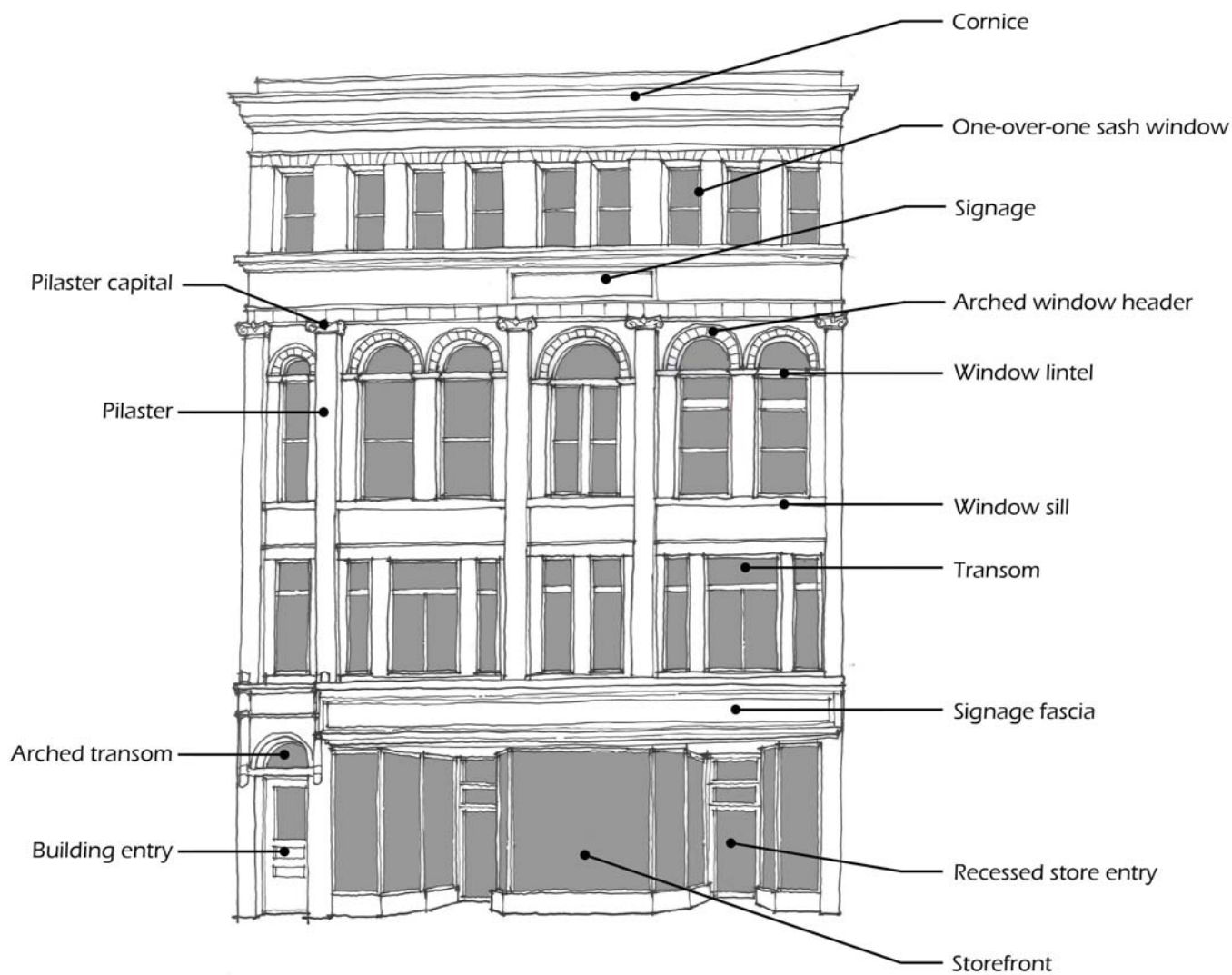


A simple "open" window sign conveys an important message.

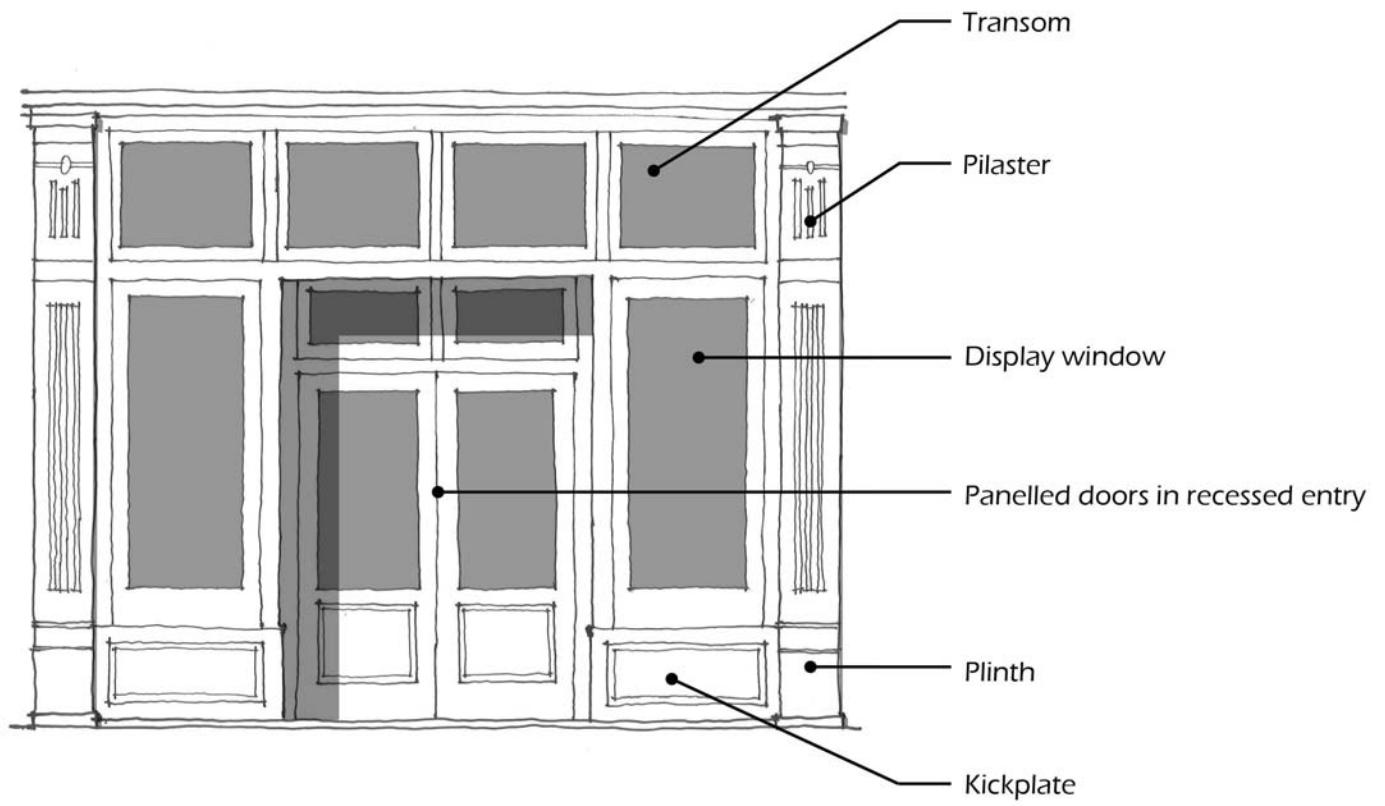


Simple goosneck light to high-light a wall sign.

Commercial Storefront Illustration



Typical Storefront Illustration



Typical Residential Illustration

