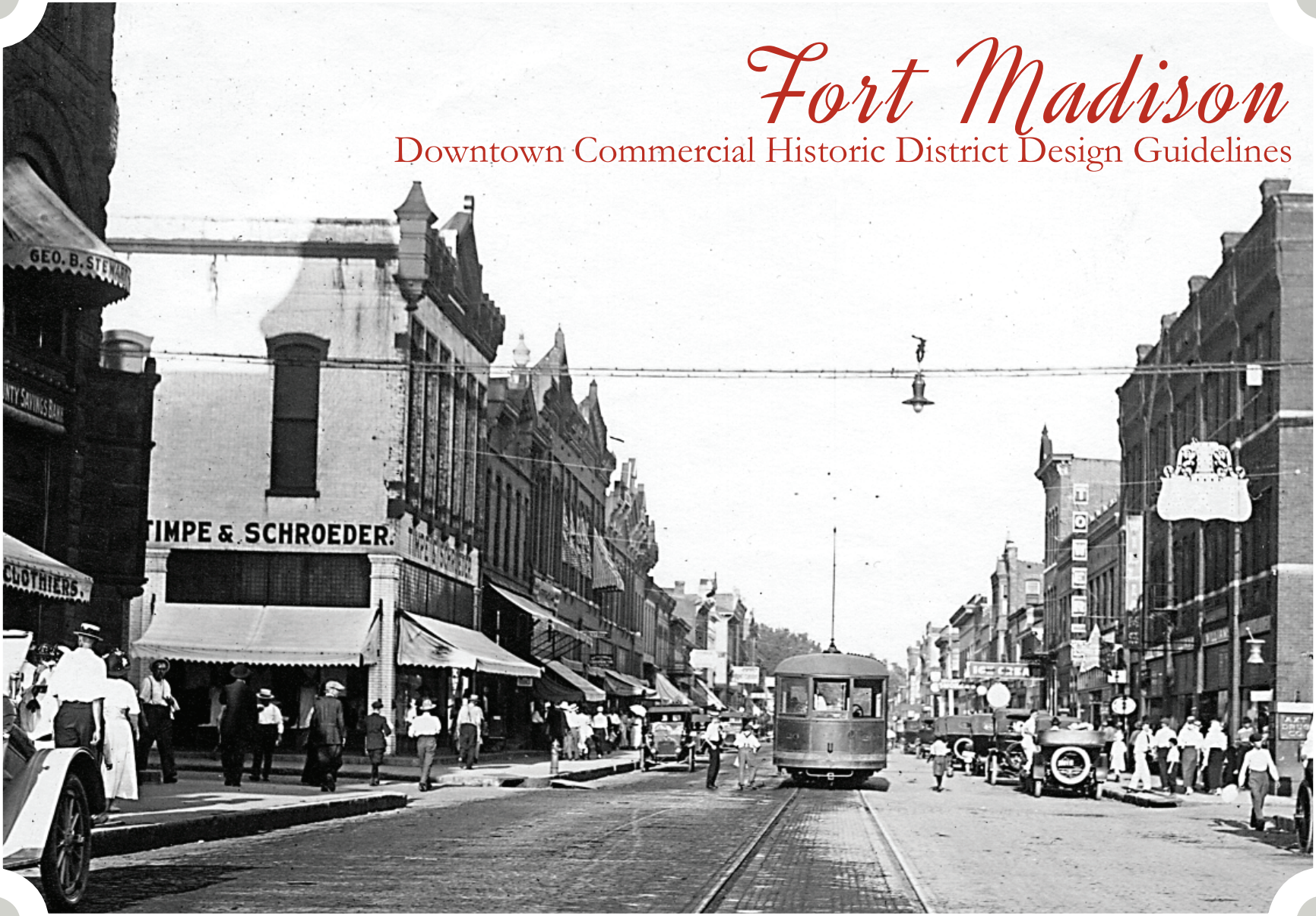
Fort Madison

Downtown Commercial Historic District Design Guidelines



Submitted by RDG Planning & Design, Spring 2013

All historic photos found in this document are of the town of Fort Madison, Iowa. Thank you to the Fort Madison Main Street for providing all historic photos.

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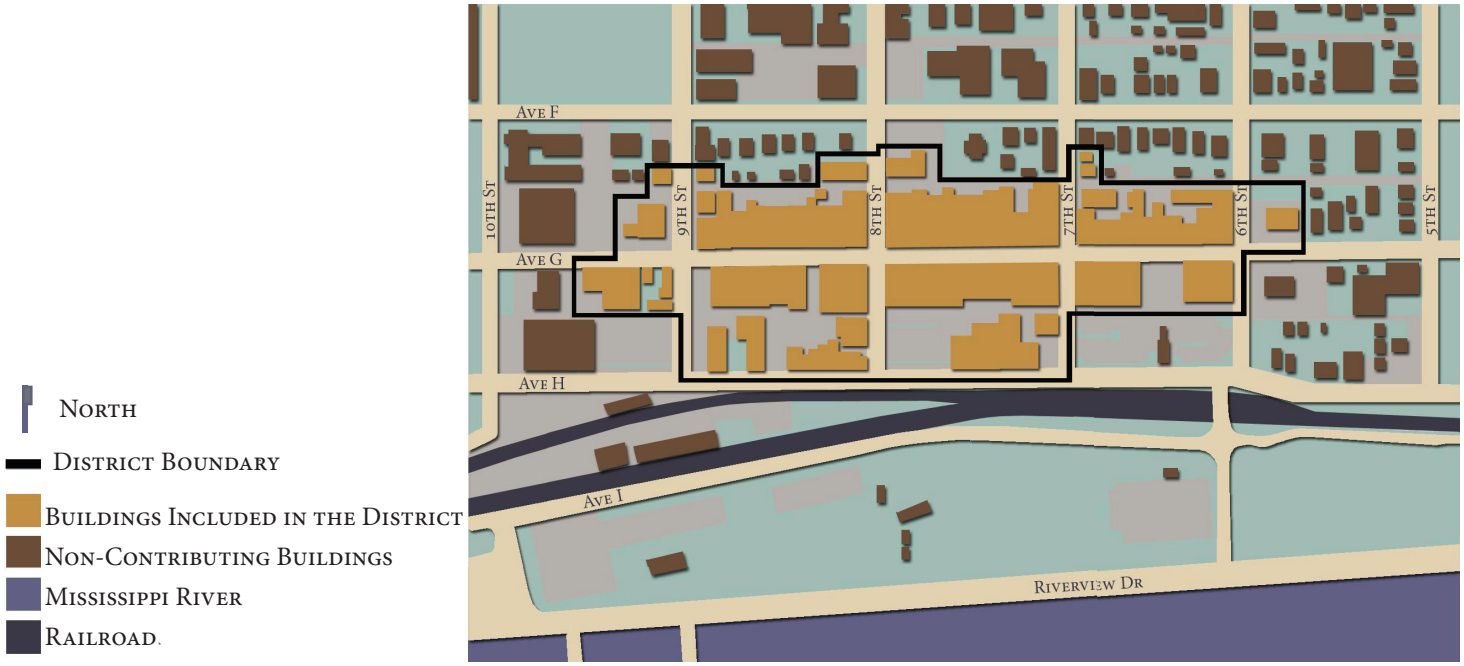
Downtown Map

The boundaries for Fort Madison's Downtown Commercial Historic District are roughly Ave F and Ave H on the north-south boundary, and 9th Street and 6th Street on the east-west boundary. This district was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2007.



Introduction

Fort Madison is a community rich in history and culture. Located at the first permanent U.S. military fortification on the Upper Mississippi River – Fort Madison was built in 1808. The fort was later abandoned and burned in 1813 due to constant attack from the nearby Sauk tribe.

The town itself was named after the fort and was incorporated in 1838. Here one will find the location of a battle of the War of 1812 fought against Black Hawk; the first U.S. military cemetery in the upper Midwest; and the world's largest double swing-span bridge in the world.

As one of the oldest settlements in the State of Iowa, Fort Madison was one of three posts built by the U.S. Army to gain control over the recently acquired territories bought from France, then known as the Louisiana Purchase.

When the United States government built a prison at Fort Madison in 1839, Iowa was still a territory. Immigrants from Germany, England and Ireland settled the surrounding area and by 1850 just over 1,500 people called Fort Madison home. With the coming of the railroad, and more specifically the Santa Fe railroad, Fort Madison flourished in the 1880's into the early 20th century. This is evidenced by the numerous Late Victorian houses and commercial buildings still found in its historic downtown.

As the river had in the beginning, the railroad brought jobs to the community. Iowa's oldest Hispanic community can attribute its roots to these job opportunities that flooded the town. Those who came and could not find jobs with the railroad found opportunities in other business ventures.

The architecture of Fort Madison reflects its diverse, historic background and provides insight into what made the town what it is today.

Fort Madison's Architectural History

The period of significance for the historic district in Fort Madison ranges from 1850 to 1958. This period of significance is the time period in which most of the historic buildings of architectural and historic significance in the district were constructed and occupied. Most of these buildings can be classified as Federal or various versions of Late Victorian including Italianate and Romanesque styles.

Fort Madison is a linear town, constructed along the Mississippi River at a point where the river runs east-west. Avenue H (historically "Front Street") is the southern border of the Fort Madison Downtown Commercial Historic District. Construction was originally limited to the north side of the street. Here one can find some of the oldest buildings in the district.

Avenue G (historically "2nd Street") became the central business street of Fort Madison in the late 1800's, during the town's boon. Most of the buildings in the Downtown Commercial Historic District face this street.

The composition of the typical downtown Fort Madison building consist of a commercial storefront at street level with one to two levels above that are consistent in style and appearance. Most buildings are brick or brick clad. Other materials found in the district are stone, glazed tile, concrete, stucco, wood and cast iron.

The earliest buildings, constructed in the late 1850's, have elements that resemble the Federal style. Details from these styles can be seen in buildings with side gables.

In the late 1860's the more common practice for commercial buildings across the country was a flat or low-sloped roof surrounded by a parapet. This can be seen in Fort Madison as well. Popular styles that used this configuration were a commercial interpretation of Late Victorian styles such as Italianate and Romanesque. Buildings built after the turn of the 20th century often reflect Classical Revival details.

Fort Madison's Architectural History

These guidelines were developed to serve as a resource and guide for building owners in Fort Madison's downtown commercial historic district. Maintaining these buildings in their historic form is an important step in keeping the culture and history of Fort Madison alive. These buildings are enjoyed not only by the building owners and the local community, but also by visitors. Preserving these structures is a key step in maintaining a piece of the story of America's past as well.

Early buildings in the district were mostly frame construction, but by the 1870's brick became the dominate construction material. The date of the district's existing building stock begins in the 1850's and is primarily two-story masonry commercial buildings. There are a few one- and three-story commercial buildings along with significant public buildings. First floor uses tended to be commercial with upper floors being occupied as offices or housing. Most of the buildings were built in the Italianate style, with more Neo-Classical Revival influence in those buildings built after 1900.

For many buildings, it is difficult to label a building with any one particular style. Builders at the time often wanted their buildings to take on the style popular at the time, but the end result was often a modified interpretation. It is important to keep in mind that while many of the buildings of Fort Madison reflect particular elements of certain styles, most buildings in small towns across the country are rarely a pure example of one style but rather a combination of several stylistic influences. Rather than attempting to label one's building in a particular style, a building owner should instead become familiar with the various details that make up his or her building to learn more about the history of the building. A few of the more common styles found in Fort Madison's commercial historic district are highlighted on the next page.

Fort Madison's Architectural History

Federal

The Federal style was popular prior Fort Madison's founding, but continued to be used in the Midwest, where styles lasted a few decades beyond what was popular on the East Coast. Federal details include gabled roofs with low pitches, louvered shutters and simple details.

Italianate

Italianate was a popular style for commercial buildings in the 1870's and 80's throughout the Midwest. It is a formal style featuring decorative hoods above tall, thin windows, large brackets and wide eaves. Pronounced moldings and details such as quoins and stringcourses are often common as well.

Romanesque Revival

Romanesque Revival features monochromatic brick or stone and features semi-circular arched windows. While this Fort Madison building is not a pure example, Romanesque Revival details can be seen in the multi-colored and decorative brickwork, corbel table and hood molds with corbel stops.

Neoclassical

Fort Madison buildings built after 1900 commonly demonstrate a more restrained design than earlier Victorian and Italianate styles. These structures are very loosely based on the Neoclassical style, which was based on the Greek orders.

Moderne

Moderne or Art Moderne buildings have smooth wall surfaces, rounded corners and horizontal or vertical lines that give a building a streamline quality suggestive of movement and technology. Common materials include polished stone, glass, aluminum, stainless steel, and neon. This style was in use from the 1920's through the 1950's.

The Guidelines

The objectives of these guidelines are for the betterment of the entire Fort Madison community. More specifically, the goals are to:

o Encourage property owners to retain the visual and historical integrity of the district.
o Protect and enhance property values.
o Aid in quality design decisions, based on the "Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation."
o Aid in qualifying for financial incentives.

How do I use the Guidelines?

1. Become familiar with the guidelines and read through them.

2. Identify areas that are applicable to your building. Do more research if a particular topic is of importance to your building.

3. Apply the guidelines to your project. Determine what is right for your project. Base your design decisions on the history of your building – such as photographs and existing materials still remaining. Avoid creating a "false past" for your building.

Review the photographs shown in this document. Not all images are of Fort Madison buildings, but were chosen to illustrate "recommended" and "not recommended" approaches to design. Note the green check marks to depict "recommended" treatments and the red "x's" to depict "not recommended" approaches. Historic images have not been marked but are for reference only. Take care to read the text associated with each photograph. Few historic buildings have everything right (or wrong) with them, so be aware of what is being highlighted.

Planning for Your Project

When building owners decide to work on their historic commercial building, several important questions face them.

- If the building is fairly intact but deteriorated, what repairs should be done first?
- If significant alternations have been made, should they be kept, should the building be restored to its original appearance, or should another approach be taken?
- If the building is no longer in commercial use, can the new use be accommodated while retaining the commercial appearance of the building?
- What is an appropriate and acceptable budget for the building owner?
- Is the rehabilitation feasible?

One of the biggest questions for building owners when considering work on their building is "where to begin?" This section is designed to provide some general assistance in the process of working on a historic building.

For more information, see Preservation Briefs:

#17 - Architectural Character - Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving their Character

#35 - Understanding Old Buildings: The Process of Architectural Investigation

Building Assessment

Before beginning a project, an assessment, or "physical exam," of the building should be completed. This assessment will help lay the groundwork for future projects. The following steps will prove to be a useful tool for any building owner who desires to pursue a rehabilitation project:

- ***Research and Document Your Historic Property.*** Use historic photographs, read through the National Register nomination and look at the site inventory form to understand the history of your building. This information will go a long way in setting a direction your rehabilitation project should take. Contact the Fort Madison Main Street Office or the State Historic Preservation Office for more information. Take photos of the interior and exterior of your building prior to beginning any work.

- ***Evaluate and Assess Existing Conditions.*** The report should inventory the existing condition of the building and relate it back to treatment types. Most importantly it should answer the questions "what needs attention and why?"
- ***Work Description.*** A description of what work would be needed to stabilize the building, meet specific treatment types, and most importantly what will be needed to accomplish the owner's goals. Also consider how historic materias and features will be protected during the construction phase.
- ***Prioritizing Projects.*** Often a building requires more work than an owner can finance at one time. Understanding the priority of projects can put the investment to best use. Critical projects should be done first with more cosmetic projects waiting until last.

Set a Budget

Once the building owner decides what projects have to be completed first, a realistic budget should be established.

Resources

Postcards and old photographs provide a good source of information. Illustrations and "doctored" photographs should be used with caution; finding two sources is always encouraged.

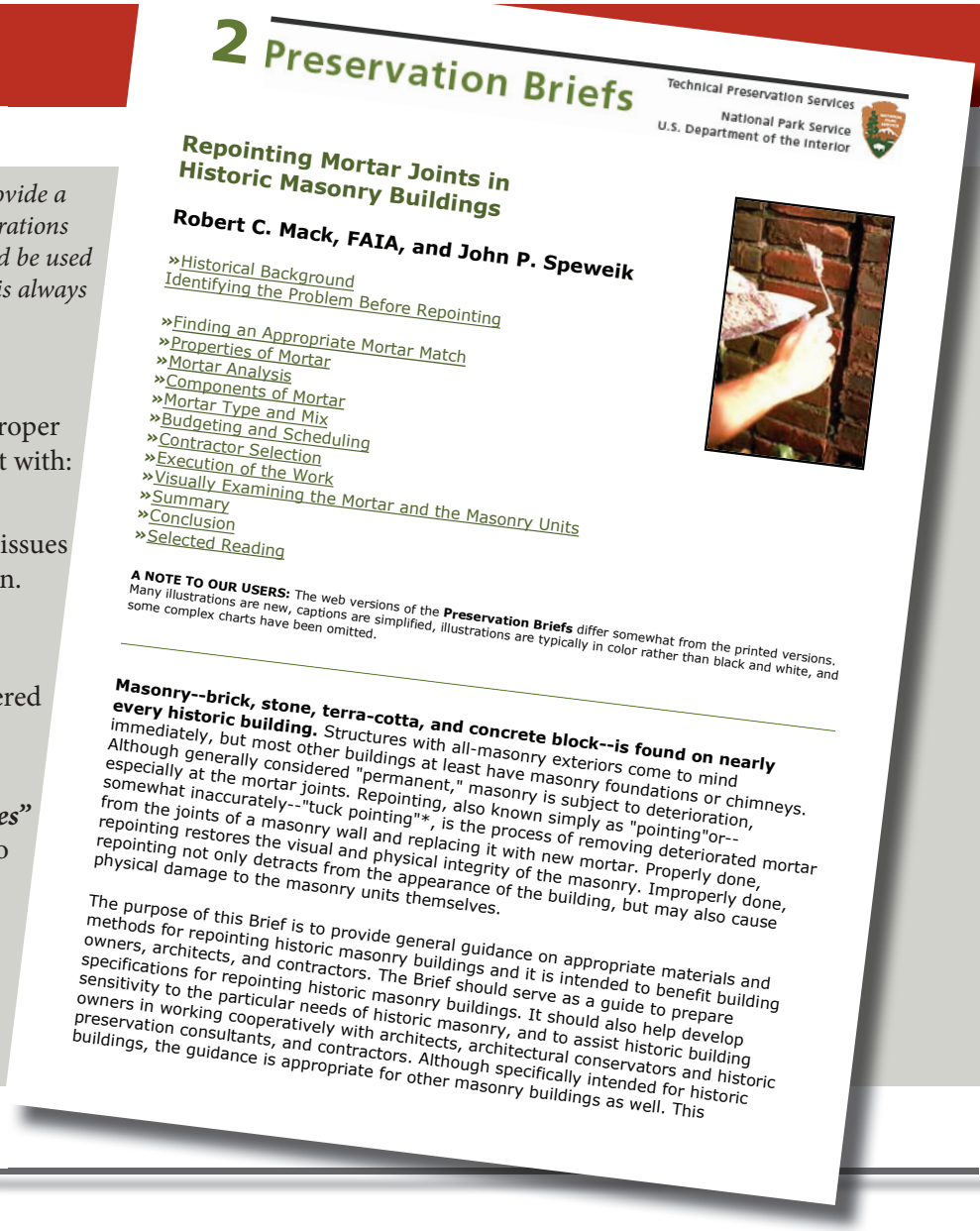
Many resources are available for building owners to research when learning proper methodologies for their historic property. Below are a few resources to start with:

National Park Service - Preservation Briefs
These preservation briefs describe recommended solutions to many construction issues building owners deal with on projects. The NPS continues to add to this collection.
www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm

National Park Service - Interpreting the Standards Bulletins
These bulletins provide further insight and explanation to many of the topics covered in the Preservation Briefs.
www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/standards-bulletins.htm

"The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties"
This book highlights recommended and not recommended practices, according to "The Standards" issued by the Secretary of the Interior.

The State Historic Preservation Office [SHPO]
State Historic Preservation Officers offer a wealth of information.
http://www.iowahistory.org/historic-preservation/index.html
Also consider contacting your local Historic Preservation Commission.



2 Preservation Briefs

Technical Preservation Services
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings

Robert C. Mack, FAIA, and John P. Speweik

»Historical Background
Identifying the Problem Before Repointing
»Finding an Appropriate Mortar Match
»Properties of Mortar
»Mortar Analysis
»Components of Mortar
»Mortar Type and Mix
»Budgeting and Scheduling
»Contractor Selection
»Execution of the Work
»Visually Examining the Mortar and the Masonry Units
»Summary
»Conclusion
»Selected Reading

A NOTE TO OUR USERS: The web versions of the **Preservation Briefs** differ somewhat from the printed versions. Many illustrations are new, captions are simplified, illustrations are typically in color rather than black and white, and some complex charts have been omitted.

Masonry--brick, stone, terra-cotta, and concrete block--is found on nearly every historic building. Structures with all-masonry exteriors come to mind immediately, but most other buildings at least have masonry foundations or chimneys. Although generally considered "permanent," masonry is subject to deterioration, especially at the mortar joints. Repointing, also known simply as "pointing"or--somewhat inaccurately--"tuck pointing"*, is the process of removing deteriorated mortar from the joints of a masonry wall and replacing it with new mortar. Properly done, repointing restores the visual and physical integrity of the masonry. Improperly done, repointing not only detracts from the appearance of the building, but may also cause physical damage to the masonry units themselves.

The purpose of this Brief is to provide general guidance on appropriate materials and methods for repointing historic masonry buildings and it is intended to benefit building owners, architects, and contractors. The Brief should serve as a guide to prepare specifications for repointing historic masonry buildings. It should also help develop sensitivity to the particular needs of historic masonry, and to assist historic building owners in working cooperatively with architects, architectural conservators and historic preservation consultants, and contractors. Although specifically intended for historic buildings, the guidance is appropriate for other masonry buildings as well. This

Definitions

Treatment Definitions

There are many terms that are used for work on historic buildings. It is important to understand the difference of each treatment and to use them correctly. Definitions of the four major treatments as described by the National Park Service are listed to the right. Other terms you might encounter that may not be appropriate for your type of project:

Conservation: The repairing of existing historic construction materials by stabilizing and consolidating the damage, instead of removing and replacing the material with new. For example, a severely rotted wood window sill might be left in place and injected with a glue, rather than being removed and replaced. This term may also refer to the cleaning and repair of fine art, such as paintings and sculptures.

Renovation or Remodel: The work taking place to repair or modernize existing buildings while ignoring or disregarding any historic features or significance. The results may be inappropriate and irreversible. These terms are not used by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

National Park Service - Treatment Definitions

The National Park Service defines four treatment approaches for historic buildings. The following approaches are in hierarchical order:

Preservation: Places a high premium on the retention of all historic fabric through conservation, maintenance and repair. It reflects a building's continuum over time, through successive occupancies, and the respectful changes and alterations that are made. For example, maintaining an historic library in its original design and materials through regular maintenance and repair.

Rehabilitation: The most common treatment, rehabilitation is defined by the National Park Service as "the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values." For example: Taking an old warehouse and converting it into apartments while keeping the historical fabric intact as much as possible. Similar to "adaptive reuse."

Restoration: Focuses on the retention of materials from the most significant time in a property's history, while permitting the removal of materials from other periods. For example: Removing a metal slipcover that covers a nineteenth century storefront and repairing and replicating missing and damaged elements.

Reconstruction: Establishes limited opportunities to re-create a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure or object in all new materials. For example: Rebuilding an historic residence from building plans with new material at a place and time the structure no longer exists.

Standards for Rehabilitation

The guidelines established in this document follow the Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation." The standards are intended to be a guide to building owners, architects, contractors and project reviewers prior to work being initiated.

The "Standards" do not offer technical advice, but rather outline important considerations to keep in mind and follow when planning a project involving a historic property.

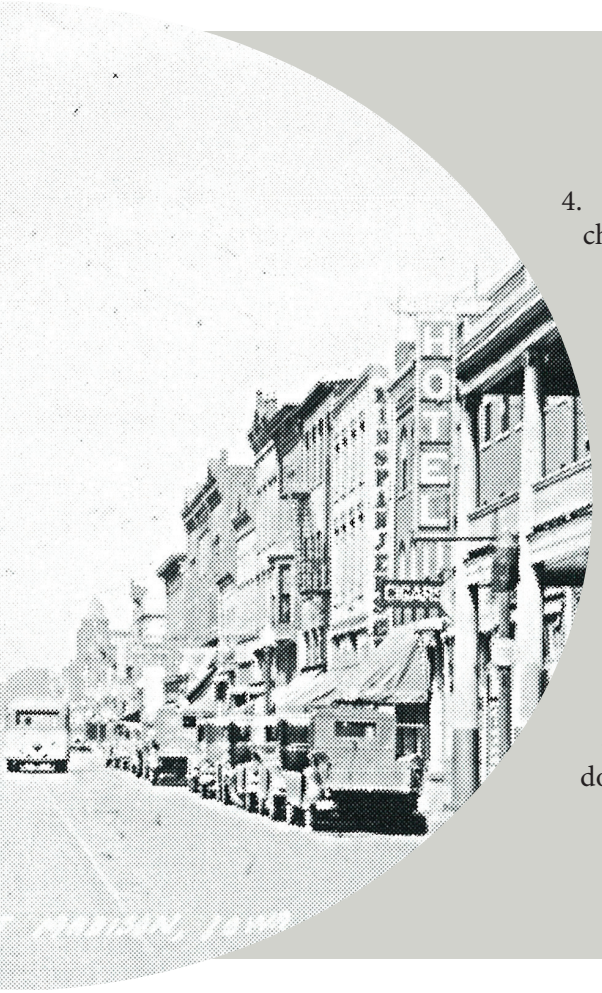
The "Standards" define rehabilitation as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values. Following the "Standards" is a key step to ensuring the preservation of any historic downtown.

The "Standards for Rehabilitation" are:

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

3. Each property shall 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 architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.



4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.

6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, IF appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible and with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall 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.

What is Historic?

Image 1

The Period of Significance is a time when a property, neighborhood or district was associated with important events, activities, or persons, or when it attained the significance which qualify it for historic designation. For many towns, this is a time of accelerated civic growth and improvement, demonstrated with the development of an expanded downtown commercial district, evidenced with construction activity, resulting in the architecture seen today. Each nomination to the National Register of Historic Places defines this period for the property or properties named. Buildings that were constructed or existing during the Period of Significance are generally considered historic if they retain sufficient intengrity.

Buildings constructed within the last 50 years are generally not considered historic… yet. This date is a moving target. Some exceptions have been made to this rule. However, just because a building is 50 years old does not automatically make it "historic."

Loss of historic character or materials, sometimes referred to as the historic "fabric" may cause the building to lose its historic designation or ability to be deemed historic. For example, a building built within the period of significance, yet heavily altered since that time (the façade removed and the interior gutted and rebuilt) may no longer be considered historic. (As seen in Image 2 on the following page.) In a historic district, this type of building may be designated as "non-contributing" to the district. The alterations may cause people walking by it may not to even recognize that it was actually built long ago.

Each building has a set of character defining features. These are design features include: shape (form), roof, openings (windows and doors), projections, trim and secondary features, overall materials, setting, close range materials, craft details, individually important spaces, related spaces and sequence of spaces, interior features, surface materials and finishes, and exposed structure. Different buildings will have different scopes and sets of features. The condition and completeness of these features help determine the level of historic integrity for each building; the building cannot be historic with the loss of many of these features.

The National Register has four criteria that buildings and districts can be nominated under: A) Associated with important events; B) Associated with significant persons; C) Exemplify an architectural or design significance; D) Have provided (or could provide) important information in history/prehistory. Consult the publications of the National Register of Historic places for further information.

Some building alterations may "acquire" significance, however. For example, a building built in 1900 and altered in the 1930s with an Art Deco design, during the period of significance, may still be significant. This remodel, which is now considered historic by National Register standards, has very likely acquired its own significance and prominance in the district. (Image 1, for example.)

Non-Contributing Buildings

Work done on buildings that are not a part of the Fort Madison Downtown Commercial Historic District - whether they are outside of the District's boundary, or if they are simply deemed 'non-contributing' - can still make changes in an effort to improve the overall visual appeal for the district. Consider some of the following recommendations:

o Ensure that any work done to non-contributing buildings does not detract from or diminish the historic character of the overall district or adjacent buildings.

o Consider compatible paint colors to the historic district.

o Do not attempt to create a false appearance of a historic building.

o Consider designs that are compatible in size and material to the surrounding district.

o To determine whether a building is considered contributing to the historic district, look at the district nomination available through the Fort Madison Main Street Office or the Fort Madison Historic Preservation Commission or contact the State Historic Preservation Office [SHPO].

Elements of a Streetscape

The Streetscape

The commercial buildings in downtown Fort Madison are mostly two-story masonry facades. Though the overall average age of the buildings in Fort Madison is older than most Iowa towns due to its earlier settlement, the buildings and elements of the streetscape are similar in character of most Midwestern downtown districts. The zero lot lines (buildings sitting on the property line) in the downtown area mean that the relationship of the buildings to each other and to the streetscape is very important to the appearance of the downtown.

A prominent building is usually at the corner of the block.

At street level, storefronts are mostly glass, lighting the interior and offering interatction with the pedestrian on the sidewalk.

Zero lot lines mean common walls and few free standing buildings.

Decorative cornices provide continuity between buildings.

Regularly placed upper story windows create an appealing visual rhythm.

Elements of a Commercial Building

The Storefront

Functionally, the majority of the buildings in the downtown commercial historic district of Fort Madison can be described as a "two part commercial block." These types of buildings are made up of two primary functions: a public one at street level (such as retail space) and more private functions (such as offices or living space) in the levels above.

While this type of building has been in use for centuries, it became extremely popular in small towns and cities across the country in the latter half of the 19th century. Earlier American versions of this type of building were simple and relatively unadorned. However, the Victorian version – popular in the 1870's and 1880's during Fort Madison's population boom – were typically much more ornate. Features included decorative hoods above second floor windows, elaborate cornices or stringcourses. The advancement of technology and transportation during this time period allowed these building decorations to be readily available.

Later buildings (typically late 19th century into the 1920's) were more restrained in their design and followed design philosophies of the Beaux Arts and Neoclassical styles, styles popular at the time. These styles took a more academic approach in their design, with an emphasis on unity, balance and order.

Most of the buildings in the Fort Madison downtown district are two-story buildings that can be stylistically separated into three horizontal sections:

- o A storefront comprised mostly of glass.
- o Upper stories, distinguished by window style.
- o The cornice or parapet that caps off the building, much like a capital tops a column.

Storefronts

...Recommended

Storefronts - Elements of Style

Recommended

Turn of the century commercial buildings used as much glass as possible for their buildings. These large windows provided the building (which was often narrow in width but deep in length) with natural light in a time before electricity was introduced. Large windows also provided the business owner with plenty of display space for patrons passing by.

While most buildings today may not be used for the exact use as they were when originally constructed, it is important to maintain the basic elements of an historic storefront. Doing so preserves the look of the overall district. These basic elements and their features to consider are:

- o Doors – type, location, scale
- o Windows – type, location, scale
- o Transom windows – size and location
- o Bulkheads and base panels – style, material and size
- o Corner posts and cast iron columns
- o Signage – size and location
- o Other decorative features original to the building

Storefronts

...Not Recommended

Storefronts - Elements of Style

Not Recommended

o Removing or altering the storefront from its historic character
o Moving the entrance
o Removing historic materials from the storefront
o Oversized and/or lighted signage
o Adding details that do not fit the original time period of the building
o Removing or covering up cornices, panels or columns.
o Using materials that are not appropriate for the building. For Fort Madison, that would include:

- Wood shakes
- Mansard designs
- Small paned windows (in most cases)
- Shutters (in most cases)
- Filled windows (or boarded up windows)

o Using replacement or substitute materials that do not convey the same appearance as other, original aspects of the building

For more information, see Preservation Briefs:

#11 - Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts
#16 - The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors
#47 - Maintaining the Exterior of Small and Medium Size Historic Buildings

Facades

...Recommended

Brick is left unpainted

Replacement windows fill the original opening and are appropriate in style and color

Transom window is left intact

Original storefront layouts have been retained

Cornice has been retained

Decorative hoods have been retained

Replacement windows fill the original opening and are appropriate in style and color

Though it is not recommended to paint brick (unless originally intended to be painted), the colors selected here are sympathetic to the district

Awning style and color are appropriate

Original storefront layouts have been retained

Facades

...Secondary Facades

Image 1

The recommendations outlined in these guidelines are not solely restricted to primary facades. Secondary facades - those that face streets or are highly visible to the public - should also be considered when planning a project. While even the primary facade shown in Image 1 is not an appropriate rehabilitation, the secondary facade has been completely neglected. One can see the impact a secondary facade has on a downtown district in Image 2.

Image 2

Windows

...Recommended

Windows

Windows play a huge role in a building's personality. It is vitally important to maintain the pattern, style, shape, rhythm and materials of the original design.

The second floor windows shown here give an occupied feel to the downtown district, while maintaining the historic rhythm of the streetscape.

Recommended

o Take a careful look at your existing, historic windows on a unit-by-unit basis. Analyze the following:

- o Window location
- o Condition of the paint
- o Condition of the frame and sill
- o Condition of the sash (rails, stiles and muntins)
- o Glazing problems
- o Hardware
- o Overall condition of the window

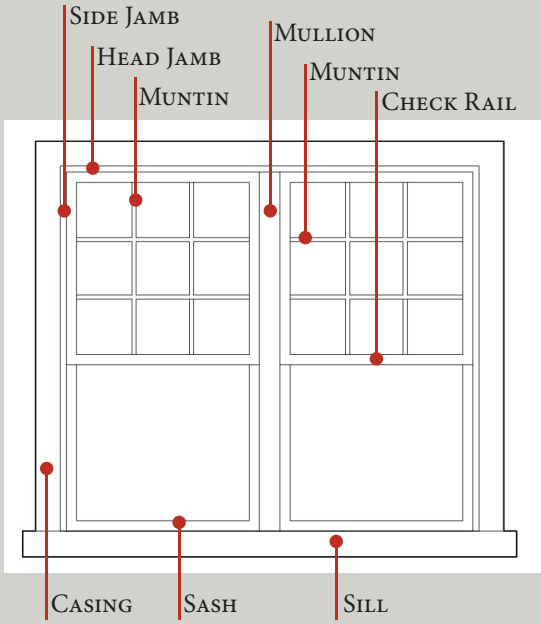
o Preserve glass, sash, hardware, and window surrounds (lintel or decorative hoods)

o If upper stories are not vacant, avoid enclosing or covering up the windows. Instead, consider using blinds or curtains to maintain an occupied appearance.

o Re-establish closed window openings

o Previously altered windows should be restored to their original size, material and design.

o Clear, non-reflective glass without tint should be used.



o Even deteriorated windows can be repaired, but in the case of a window that is far beyond repair, replacement windows should match the historic window in size, style, material, sight lines, dimension and number of panes. The new window should fill the original opening.

Windows

...Wood vs. Vinyl

Windows

Wood vs. Vinyl

A common misconception in this era where "being green" is good, is that historic windows should be replaced with more "efficient" replacement windows. This concept has no truth to it, and in fact, historic windows not only maintain the overall appearance of the original building but can be made energy efficient as well.

Consider the following facts about historic wood windows in comparison to vinyl replacements:

o Rehabilitating and weatherizing an historic wood window is more cost effective than buying a new replacement window. The average payback for a commercial replacement window can easily be 150+ years. In comparison, the average payback for a properly rehabilitated and weather stripped historic window with a proper storm window is approximately 3 – 7 years.
o Air infiltration is a bigger issue with replacement windows than properly weather-stripped historic windows.
o Many window manufacturers claim that replacement windows are the "green" choice. However, reusing existing windows eliminates the need for the production and use of virgin materials; thus resulting in a greener decision.
o The change in R-value (the measure of resistance to heat gain/loss) between historic windows and replacement windows is negligible and does not significantly improve the thermal value of the building envelope.
o The lifespan of a typical vinyl window is approximately 15 years.

The replacement vinyl windows on this facade are inappropriate for this historic building because of their style, material and scale.

For more information, see Preservation Briefs:

#9 - The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows
#13 - The Repair and Thermal Upgrading of Historic Steel Windows

Windows

...Not Recommended

Windows

Not Recommended

Avoid the following when making changes to your building's windows:

o Boarding up, bricking in or adding "lattice" to windows (Images 1, 9 & 10)

o Installing glazing and replacement sashes that are not compatible with the historic window profile (all)

o Adding shutters unless appropriate – consult historic photos of your building (Image 3)

o Installing reflective and/or dark, tinted glass (Image 4)

o Creating new window openings, not original to the building, on a prominant facade

o Partially enclosing an original window opening (Image 2, 3 & 7)

o Removing historic materials such as wood, cast iron and bronze

o Installing windows that are not appropriate in scale to the original building (Images 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 & 8)

Image 8

Image 1

Image 2

Image 3

Image 9

Image 10

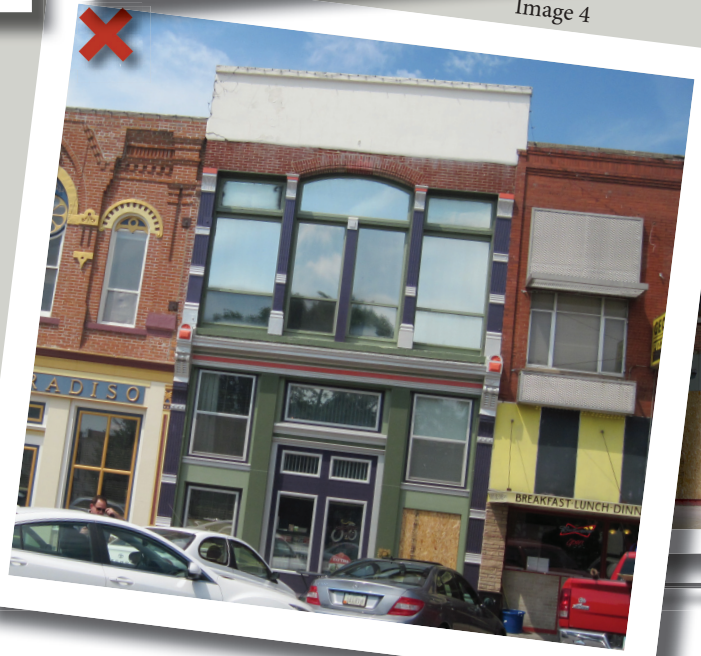
Notice the impact that the windows have on these buildings. Improper material, location, scale and detailing play a huge role in the overall look and feel of an historic district.

Image 7

Image 6

Image 5

Image 4



A well designed entry provides balance and scale to the building facade (above).

Though not original to the building, this entry (below) is historic in its own right and should be retained.

Entries

...Recommended

Entries

Entries serve as one of the first impressions for a business. With such an important role, entries should be handled appropriately.

Recommended:

- o Maintain original entrance location
- o Maintain or restore the original openings
- o Multiple storefront entries [of similar buildings] should look alike (below)
- o Identify, preserve and retain entrance features including doors, sidelights and pilasters
- o Second floor entries should be to the side (unless otherwise determined from historic photos or plans)
- o Features should be historically accurate, utilizing historic photos and other appropriate resources

Entries

...Not Recommended

Entries

Not Recommended:

- Removing or altering entrances in a way that diminishes the historic character of the building
- Cutting new entrances in the primary elevation
- Replacement material that does not match surviving details or appropriate style
- Ignoring maintenance issues
- Use of storm doors should be limited and when used, should not limit the transparency of the façade and should match the historic style of the entrance
- Additional/new door openings should not be visible from the street

By removing the original recessed opening and storefront layout, this entry remodel for a restaurant creates confusion for patrons. The entry is actually the white, unassuming door on the left.

Awnings & Utilities

...Recommended

In the days before reliable mechanical systems, awnings often served as climate control for buildings. Cloth, retractable awnings provided building patrons protection from the sun and rain. Merchandise displayed in store windows were also protected from the fading effects of the sun.

o Do not add awnings to a building where an awning would be inappropriate. (See Image 1)

o Metal and wood canopies were often added at a much later date. In most cases, these awnings are not appropriate for the building, though some may have gained significance in their own right.

o Before making a decision on an awning, do some investigating on your building. Look for evidence of awning hardware on the building; research historic photos.

Recommended:

o Cloth awnings that match the shape and size of the window

o Retractable awnings for storefronts

o Style, color and height similar to other appropriate awnings in the district (Appropriate awnings would be considered those that follow the guidelines outlined in this document.)

o Instances where they can be utilized to conceal inappropriate alterations to a storefront

o Awnings should be mounted to the building and not free standing

o Triangular, 'shed' awnings with free-hanging valances are appropriate for most commercial buildings in the Fort Madison downtown.

o The visibility of modern-day utilities such as air conditioning and heating units, cables, electrical boxes, etc. should be limited as much as possible. Take every precaution to install these items on side or rear elevations of the building.

Image 1

For more information, see Preservation Brief:

#44 - The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings: Repair, Replacement and New Design

Awnings & Utilities

...Not Recommended

Image 1

Not Recommended:

- Awnings that do not match the shape of the opening or overwhelm the building or facade
- Staple-system awnings (Image 1) are typically not appropriate for historic buildings, but may be appropriate for infill buildings
- Awnings that simulate mansard roofs and umbrellas (Images 2, 3 & 4)
- Canopies that enclose the walkway
- Backlit awnings
- Large awnings that dominate the storefront and hide distinguishing features
- Awnings that conceal architectural details such as decorative lintels
- Metal stock awnings (Image 5)
- Avoid installing air conditioning and heating units, cables, electrical boxes, etc. on primary facades. (Image 6)

Image 6

Image 2

Image 3

Image 4

Image 5

Color

Image 1

Paint Color Considerations:

Paint color can greatly enhance the historic feel of a building. The use of multiple, appropriate colors can provide additional character and appeal throughout a district. A paint color or pattern should have continuity with the district and not create a visual distraction. (Image 1) Brick and stone elements like headers and sills should be kept unpainted and cleaned. Paint analysis can determine historic paint colors.

- While paint colors are at the discretion of the building owner and do not effect a building's standing on the National Register of Historic Places, consider the following recommendations when selecting color for your building:
  - o Colors that are historically appropriate and compatible with the building and surrounding structures (many paint manufacturers have historic 'lines')
  - o Contrasting colors a shade lighter or darker on the doors, window frames, molding and cornices when appropriate
  - o Carefully consider the saturation and shade of colors; colors should emphasize details - dark colors often obscure them
  - o Avoid painting brick that has never been painted.
  - o Avoid bright hues inappropriate for the building's time period (Image 2 & 3)

Image 2

Image 3

Cornices & Other Decorative Elements

...Recommendations

Image 1

Image 2

Image 3

Exterior detailing not only add to the character of the building, but often reveal a piece of its history. Decorative elements such as cornices, moldings and figurines should be regularly maintained to prevent deterioration. Restoration or reconstruction of these elements should be done by a knowledgeable craftsman with means and methods that are sensitive to the building and its materials.

As seen in Images 1 and 2, the decorative cornices have been removed or covered up - most likely due to a lack of regular maintenance.

The decorative cornice in Image 3 ties all three buildings together and tells a story of its past - these buildings were most likely built by the same property owner at the same time.

The unique decoration in Image 4 sheds light on this building, which was originally a drinking establishment.

Historic photographs are a good source of helping a building owner understand what was originally a part of the building. Doing a physical exam can also often reveal clues as to what might have been part of the building's original story.

Image 4

Additions & Infill Buildings

...Considerations

Image 1

o Additions should preserve historical features and characters of the original building but should be distinguishable from the historic building so as to not confuse it with what is genuinely part of the past.

o Additions should be comparable to the original building in terms of size, scale and proportion.

o Contemporary, infill buildings should be compatible with their neighbors but should not be exact duplicates.

o Detailing from surrounding buildings should be reflected, but not copied, in the new building, including window shapes, cornice lines, and brick work.

o The proportion of the facade, the average height and width, should be proportionate to adjacent structures and historic character of the district.

o The composition of the facade, or the organization of its parts should be similar to surrounding buildings.

o Rhythms, such as window spacing, that are seen in adjacent buildings should be maintained.

o The proportion and size of windows on a building should be similar to surrounding structures.

Image 2

o Solid walls with no openings should not be built facing a street in downtown Fort Madison.

o Building materials should be similar to the district. For Fort Madison this would be stone or brick with metal and wood details.

o Entries should be consistent with the character of the district.

o Reconstruction of a historic structure should follow the guidelines laid out in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Reconstruction.

Note the improper setback, material, scale and proportion of the infill building in Image 1.

The contemporary building in Image 2 is compatible in size and material of its surrounding historic district but does not create a false past.

For more information, see Preservation Brief:

#14 - New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns

The site or the location of new buildings and amenities should also be considered.

o Modern conveniences and necessities such as additional parking can challenge and clutter the traditional downtown streetscape site appearance. Ways to mitigate their impacts include:

- Install building services such as elevators, exit stairs, etc. in areas and spaces that require the least possible alteration to the plan, materials, and appearance of the building.

- Avoid placing electrical and gas meters along the primary or the front facades of buildings. If it is necessary to place meters along side walls they may be placed in screened vaults.

- The following items should not be visible from the main street, and should be screened from any side streets: mechanical equipment, garbage and recycling containers, utilities and meters, outside storage associated with a business, window and wall air conditioning units.

- Service areas, including loading docks, should be located away from streets and pedestrians areas, and screened to reduce visual impact.

Site

...Considerations

Site Considerations, continued...

o New commercial buildings should be located at the front property line. This is at the edge of the sidewalk and supports the traditional "wall" of buildings along the street line.

o Improved public outdoor spaces can be encouraged through the creation of eating and seating areas, plazas, and interior courtyard spaces. However, the placement must be done carefully as not to detract from the appearance of the commercial district. Spaces between existing buildings should be in-filled with new buildings.

Parking

o Off-street parking should be located behind or to the side of structures

o Off-street parking should be screened from the adjacent right-of-way.

o When possible, shared parking (parking spaces available to more than one tenant) should be encouraged.

o Off-street parking should include some landscaping and environmentally sustainable water run-off control methods.

o Off-street parking should not be located in front of buildings or at corner nodes along the main street.

Landscape Features

...Lighting

Lighting

Lighting and signage can have a significant impact on individual buildings or the overall district. Consider the following when working on these exterior features:

Lighting - Recommended:

o Should have detailing and materials that are compatible with character and style of the building
o Free standing, period street lighting that aligns with an overall style identified for the district
o Incandescent and vapor lighting
o Concealed light fixtures or fixtures appropriate to the building's period
o Fixtures should be low profile and have minimal projections from the building face
o Hardware should be anchored into mortar (not into masonry)
o Lighting should reflect down to minimize ambient light to upper-story uses and preserve dark skies unless historical research determine otherwise
o If accent or façade lighting is desired, a comprehensive lighting design for the building should be done by a professional lighting designer
o Wiring and power lines should be concealed and not be visible

- Not Recommended:

o Avoid lighting fixtures that are not appropriate for downtown Fort Madison (such as colonial reproductions)
o Avoid florescent lighting
o Avoid lighting that conceals architectural features
o Avoid flood lighting of the building façade

Landscape Features

...Signage

Signage – Not Recommended:

o Signage that obscures architectural details
o New roof signage
o Lettering should not exceed 18”
o Back-lit signs
o Hardware of hanging signs should not damage wall surfaces and should be mounted into the mortar, not the brick
o Moveable or portable signs other than sandwich boards
o Neon signs, unless it is existing sign that is historically significant
o Internally illuminated signage
o Signs with mirrors or other highly reflective surfaces
o Flashing signs

Signage - Recommended:

o Confirm signage requirements with the Fort Madison sign ordinance
o Should be located at the storefront lintel or transom area
o If signage cannot be applied at the lintel area, it should be installed on a flat, unadorned part of the façade
o Consider painting signage (appropriate in size and style) directly onto the glass of the storefront
o Consider applying it on awnings
o Should be in scale with the building – proportional to the building’s horizontal and vertical elements
o Projecting signs must meet the height and projection regulations of any local governing bodies
o New murals and other artwork of a non-commercial nature should be sympathetic to the district’s character

The signage seen in Image 1 is inappropriate in scale, style and location. Image 2 shows a correct placement of signage. The signage in Image 3 is not original to the building, but is considered historic in its own right.

For more information, see Preservation Brief:

#25 - The Preservation of Historic Signs

Other Site Considerations

The typical downtown historic building's site is rather limited to sidewalks, parking and back alleys. However, these pieces are an important piece of the downtown district as a whole and should be given careful consideration in an effort to keep the appearance of the district intact.

Other site decisions that should be avoided:

Demolition of historic buildings should only occur as a last resort. Most buildings are not beyond repair. A demolished building in the downtown historic district leaves a missing link that cannot be replaced and jeopardizes the historic district's listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Important elevations are not restricted to the facade where the primary entrance is located. **Secondary facades** (as seen in Image 2 on the following page) should also receive careful consideration when doing rehabilitation work and should be compatible with the style, massing and rhythm of the primary facade. The guidelines listed in this document should be applied to secondary facades in addition to the primary facade.

Image 1

Image 2

Image 3

Image 4

Image 1: Demolition should be avoided at all costs. Once gone, an historic building cannot be replaced.

Image 2: While this facade does not face the community main street, careful consideration should have been given to its details and materials. The window pattern shown does not respect the scale of the rest of the district's buildings.

Image 3: The need for additional parking is not a reason to demolish an historic structure. Parking lots in downtown districts portray a diminishing and dying downtown.

Image 4: All new construction, no matter how minimal, should still respect the historic district as a whole. Appropriate materials and scale are just a few factors one should consider when constructing an addition.

Image 5: While "pocket parks" may seem like an attractive option for a vacant lot, they are not a reason to demolish a vacant building. Too many pocket parks, as with parking lots, can give a sense of vacancy to a downtown.

Image 5

Maintenance

...Recommended

A well maintained building adds beauty to the historic district and is sure to be appreciated by all who pass by. A well thought out rehabilitation project and ongoing maintenance plan will be a benefit to its owners for years to come.

Proper, regular maintanence is a building owner's best defense against a deteriorating historic building. Routine maintenance is less expensive than repairs that would be necessary in the future.

Recommendations:

o Routinely clean and maintain your building to extend its life

o Cleaning masonry should only be done to halt deterioration or remove heavy soiling.

o Masonry surface cleaning tests should be done before any cleaning is done to determine the gentlest method possible.

o Any cleaning of masonry should be done with the gentlest techniques as possible, such as low pressure water and detergents, using natural bristle brushes.

o Removing damaged or deteriorated paint to the next sound layer and doing this through the gentlest means possible, which is usually hand scraping.

o Routine painting should occur to keep materials protected from the elements. Improper paint jobs or missing paint will accelerate deterioration of materials, particularly the rotting of wood.

o Repaired masonry should be as inconspicuous and compatible as possible.

o Ensure proper drainage so that water does not stand on flat, horizontal surfaces or accumulate in curved decorative features. Repair damaged or ineffective gutters as quickly as possible to prevent future water damage.

For more information, see Preservation Briefs:

#1 - Cleaning and Water-Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings

#6 - Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings

#10 - Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork

#38 - Removing Graffiti from Historic Masonry

#39 - Holding the Line: Controlling Unwanted Moisture in Historic Buildings

Maintenance

...Not Recommended

Image 1

While regular maintenance is a building owner's best defense against a deteriorating building, improper methods of maintenance can also be harmful to a building and its materials.

Building owners should refrain from **painting masonry** that was originally unpainted. Paint can prevent the masonry from "breathing." Breathing allows unwanted moisture to escape. If this moisture can not escape, the trapped moisture will attempt to leave the building in another way, often causing damage to building material (Image 3). "Waterproof" sealers should be used with precaution - careful research should be done to determine if this is an appropriate solution for your building.

Improper maintanence techniques, such as **sandblasting** (Image 4) is extremely harmful to the masonry. Sandblasting, often used to "clean" the building, strips away the baked, outer shell of the masonry. Without this protective layer, masonry is much more susceptible to to the deteriorating effects of rain and other extreme weather. Sandblasting should be avoided at all costs.

Care should be taken when using **harmful salts** near buildings. Salts can erode finishes, leaving building materials venerable to rapid deterioration. (Image 1)

Image 2

Image 3

Image 4

Mortar

Nearly all historic structures have some form of masonry - brick, stone, terra cotta or concrete block. Paying attention to the composition of the mortar is critical to retain not only the visual appearance of the building, but also its structural integrity.

Repointing is often required in order to extend the life of the masonry. This process involves the removal of deteriorated mortar and replacing it with mortar that is appropriate for the specific masonry used.

Recommendations:

o Masonry mortar joints should be repaired when there is evidence of disintegrating mortar, cracks in joints, loose bricks, damp walls or evidence of moisture damage on the interior, such as damaged plaster.

o Deteriorated mortar should be removed by hand-raking (not power tools), thus avoiding damage to the masonry.

o New mortar should match the old mortar in strength, composition, color, texture and joint width and profile.

o A mortar analysis should be performed to determine the appropriate mortar composition. Inappropriate mortar is not only visually unappealing, but can also cause damage to the masonry. (Image 1 on the following page.) Mortar analysis play a crucial role in a successful masonry project and can be performed relatively inexpensively. Contact the Fort Madison Main Street office, State Historic Preservation Office or do an internet search for recommended professionals and additional information.

o It is important for the new mortar to provide the proper balance of strength and flexibility to the masonry. The compressive strength of the new mortar must be softer than the masonry units being repointed. The new mortar's vapor permeability must also be greater than the masonry units to prevent damage to the masonry.

o The sand used in the new mortar must match the sand in the historic masonry. Doing so will help ensure that the color and texture of the new mortar will look similar to the historic mortar.

For more information, see Preservation Brief:

#2 - Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings

Image 1

Image 2

Image 3

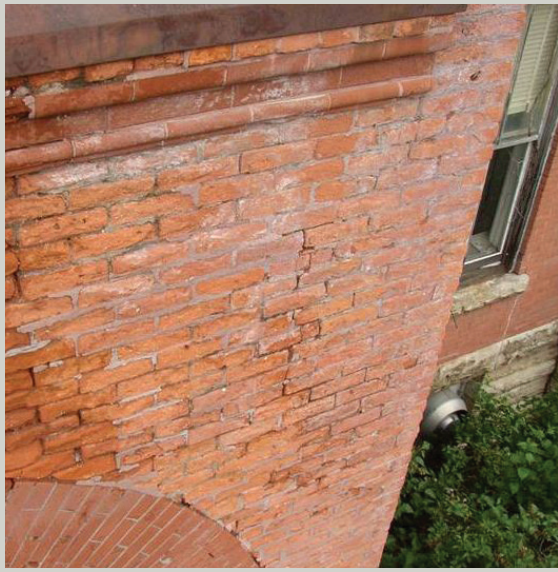


Image 4

Mortar is an important part of a masonry building. Without proper installation and care, mortar can deteriorate, leading to masonry problems which in turn causes issues on the interior. An expertly done repointing job will save money for building owners in the future. Image 1 shows the effects of sandblasting, which has removed the protective layer of the masonry units - causing them to errode. Not only can the incorrect ratio and type of ingredients in mortar create an unappealing appearance, it can also be damaging to the building (Images 2, 3 and 4).

Did you know?

The terms "tuck pointing" and "repointing" are often incorrectly, interchangably used.

"Tuck pointing" is the process of applying a raised, decorative treatment of mortar on top of flush mortar joints. **"Repointing"** is the method of removing deteriorated mortar so that new mortar can be applied.

Materials

Historic buildings use many construction materials that are no longer commonly used. Even materials such as masonry and stone, which are still popular today can pose a challenge to those working on historic rehabilitation projects due to changing techniques and applications. Building owners should take care to research proper techniques when it comes to maintenance and repair of their building's materials. Hiring craftsmen and contractors that are capable and knowledgeable of historic building materials is key to a successful project.

Many of the National Park Service's Preservation Briefs have been noted throughout these guidelines. Following are a few additional Briefs that focus on common historic building materials that could be found in Fort Madison:

#7 - The Preservation of Historic Glazed Architectural Terra-Cotta

#8 - Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings: The Appropriateness of Substitute Materials for Resurfacing Histroic Wood Frame Buildings

#12 - The Preservation of Historic Pigmented Structural Glass (Vitrolite and Carrara Glass)

#15 - Preservation of Historic Concrete

#22 - The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stucco

#27 - The Maintenance and Repair of Architectural Cast Iron

#33 - The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stained and Leaded Glass

#42 - The Maintenance, Repair and Replacement of Historic Cast Stone

Historic building materials should always be used in lieu of new, substitute materials when possible. It is virtually impossible to know if modern materials will be compatible with historic ones. The long term performance of new materials is often uncertain. Care should be taken to match physical properties in an effort to not only provide an aesthetically pleasing end result, but also one that will last for many years to come. There are, of course, special circumstances where it is not possible to use historic materials. For example:

- The unavailability of historic materials
- The unavailability of skilled craftsmen
- Inherent flaws in the original materials
- Code-required changes

Preservation Brief #16 - The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors highlights many commonly used substitute materials. This Brief also covers application, advantages, disadvantages and a checklist of items to consider when using the material. Materials highlighted in this Brief are:

- Cast Aluminum
- Cast Stone (dry tamped)
- Glass Fiber Reinforced Concretes (GFRC)
- Precast Concrete
- Fiber Reinforced Polymers (FRP, Fiberglass)
- Epoxies (Epoxy Concretes, Polymer Concretes)

It is critical to do careful research when using new materials as a poor choice or application could become a costly mistake. New materials should only be used as a last resort.

Financial Resources

Several programs are available for tax credits, loans, and tax exemptions. The rehabilitation work must conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and is usually subject to review by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

- The State Historic Preservation and Cultural & Entertainment District Tax Credit Program provides a state income tax credit for the sensitive rehabilitation of historic buildings. It ensures character-defining features and spaces of buildings are retained and helps revitalize surrounding neighborhoods. The Program provides an income tax credit of 25% of qualified rehabilitation costs. For commercial properties, including multi-family housing and mixed-use projects, the cost of the rehabilitation work must be at least 50% of the assessed value of the building, excluding the land. This is a very popular program and demand for credits may exceed the yearly amount available state-wide, meaning you may have to wait in line for it, especially when it comes to large projects. Credits are reserved using a sequencing and prioritization system.

- A Federal income tax credit of 20% is available if the property is income-producing and qualifies for the Federal Rehabilitation Investment Tax.

- A separate Federal income tax credit of 10% is available for the rehabilitation of non-historic buildings placed in service before 1936. The building must be rehabilitated for non-residential use. In order to qualify for the tax credit, the rehabilitation must meet three criteria: at least 50% of the existing external walls must remain in place as external walls, at least 75% of the existing external walls must remain in place as either external or internal walls, and at least 75% of the internal structural framework must remain in place. There is no formal review process for rehabilitations of non-historic buildings. (You can't take both the Federal 10% and 20% tax credits.)

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). This is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, administered by the Iowa Economic Development Authority. This is a competitive grant typically applied for by a city, sometimes partnering with a non-profit, for the purpose of streetscape façade rehabilitation and infrastructure improvements.

- Temporary Historic Property Tax Exemption. Provides a local property tax incentive for the sensitive, "substantial rehabilitation" of historic buildings. While all counties are required to offer this exemption, not all counties have set priorities for the program. There is a minimum amount of rehabilitation investment needed to be eligible for this program. A "substantial rehabilitation test" is required. The program provides a combination of four years full exemption from any increased valuation due to the rehabilitation, followed by four years of property tax increases (25% per year) up to the new valuation.

- Historical Resource Development Program (HRDP) grants. These are funded by the Resource Enhancement and Protection Act (REAP). The purpose of the REAP/HRDP Grants Program is to provide funds to preserve, conserve, interpret, enhance, and educate the public about the historical resources of Iowa. These grants are awarded for Documentary Collections, Historic Preservation, Museums and Country Schools. Project types that can be funded with HRDP grants include: acquisition and development of historical resources, preservation and conservation of historical resources, interpretation of historical resources, and the professional training and educational programs on the acquisition, development, preservation, conservation, and interpretation of historical resources. Non-profits, governmental units, individuals and private corporations and businesses are eligible for the grants. The historical resource benefiting from the grant must be made accessible (or open) to the public at least part time on a regular basis. Building rehabilitation projects must include the services of a preservation architect. Examples of projects include: acquire, develop or preserve real property listed on the National Register of Historic Places, purchase equipment to rehabilitate a property listed on the National Register of Historic Places, nominate properties to the National Register of Historic Places, interpret historic properties and sites, and educate the public; train staff; or hire consultants who are experts on historic preservation. There are also Emergency Grants available under this program. These grants require matching funds from the owner or other sources; the ratio depends on the type of applicant.

Fort Madison

Downtown Historic Design Guidelines