

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

Village of Grafton, Wisconsin

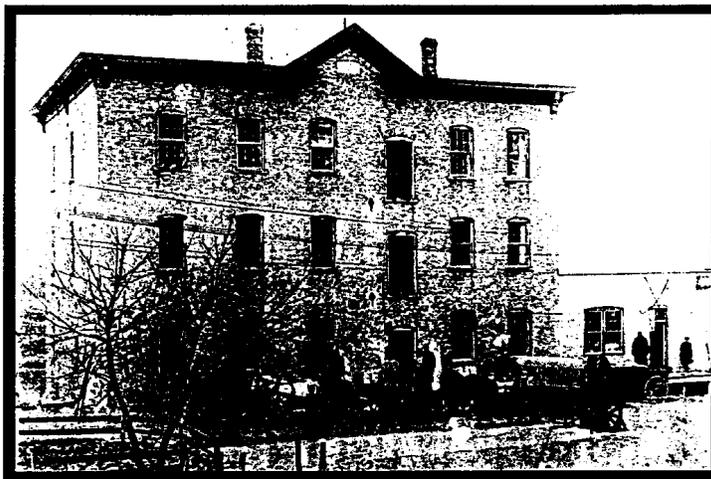
Excerpted from the Grafton Downtown Master Plan
Adopted by the Village Plan Commission on February 23, 1999



SCHREIBER/ANDERSON ASSOCIATES, INC.
VANDEWALLE & ASSOCIATES

IV. DESIGN GUIDELINES

Downtown Grafton is rich in history. The area around Bridge Street, Wisconsin Avenue and the Milwaukee River was the center for early commercial and industrial activities in Grafton. Water power harnessed by the first dam built on Milwaukee River between 1842 and 1844 was the primary reason for location of the Village and the Downtown. Early river related industries prior to the turn of the century included sawmills, grist mills, a chair factory, a brewery, and a cheese factory. The Grafton Woolen Mill, still located on the river near Bridge Street, was built in 1880. The first mill west of Philadelphia to manufacture worsted yarn, the Grafton Woolen Mill was designated as an historic landmark in 1983. Business in Downtown Grafton developed overtime to support the thriving milling industry.



Today, Downtown Grafton includes a broad collection of commercial and residential buildings which represent the historic development of Downtown from its beginning as a milling center throughout the commercial expansion period of the 1900s. The residential neighborhoods north and south of the Downtown also includes a collection of historic homes that were constructed as part of the early history of the Downtown.

Many buildings in Downtown Grafton share similar characteristics. Most buildings are two story structures constructed of either brick or wood. Some buildings were originally built as commercial buildings while others were built as residences and later converted into shops or offices on the first floor with residential or commercial uses on the upper floors. A number of buildings are still in residential use. While some buildings retain their original architectural character, many have been dramatically altered and have lost their historic character. The addition of several new commercial buildings with contemporary identities has also compromised the historic integrity of the Downtown.

It is important for property owners to invest in building and storefront improvements to create a stronger "sense of place" and identity for Downtown Grafton. Public and private investment to create a more pleasing downtown image is a key part of a comprehensive economic revitalization strategy for the

Downtown. The design guidelines presented in the following pages are intended to help property owners, business owners and developers make sound investment decisions in building improvements that will enhance the character and identity for the Downtown. It is not the intent of these guidelines to restrict individual expression but rather direct that expression towards a standard of quality. When applied, these guidelines will ensure against fragmented or incompatible developments and reduce the visual impact of past unconscious design decisions.

DOWNTOWN THEME

An historic theme has been chosen for the design guidelines because of the number of historic buildings that still exist today and the visibility of the historic and scenic Milwaukee River and dam along Bridge Street. Implementation of an historic theme will result in an attractive visual character for the Downtown and instill a sense of community pride that comes from an awareness of its origins. Property owners are encouraged to maintain, preserve, restore or reconstruct those special architectural features which contribute to the historic character of the Downtown. Before any building changes or additions are made, it is important to understand the historic integrity of the structure, the building's relationship to nearby buildings and the building's contribution to the desired downtown character and theme. To this end, buildings owners should investigate how the building was originally designed and detailed as a starting point for making changes. The following design guidelines are intended to facilitate an understanding of the intrinsic architectural historic qualities that are unique to Downtown Grafton.

HISTORIC BUILDING FACADE

The historic building facade consists of three main parts: the storefront, the upper facade, and the cornice. Scale, proportion and rhythm establish the framework within which these components are organized. Scale refers to the measured relationship between one building element and another. For example, human or pedestrian scale refers to the use of the human body as the scale of measurement. Proportion refers to the interrelationship of building elements to produce visual order and balance. Rhythm refers to the visual movement created by the repetition of building elements.

The key to good building facade improvements is the treatment of the entire facade (the storefront, upper facade and cornice) as a single unit and the retention of as much of the original building character as possible. When replacement or repair is necessary, it should reflect the original design and materials as closely as possible. If new materials are necessary, they should be sympathetic to the original materials. The main elements of the building facade are illustrated below and described in the following text.



Storefront

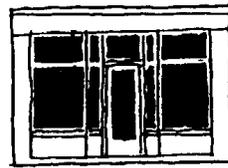
The storefront is the street level portion of the building facade. It usually includes a large glass display window with bulkheads or kickplates to provide protection from breakage and to elevate merchandise to eye level for easy viewing. Many storefronts also have translucent transoms above the display window to filter light into the ground floor space. A structural beam spans the storefront opening to support the weight of the upper facade. Sometimes this structural beam is exposed on the outside of the building as a decorative element or used as a surface for building signage.

TYPICAL STOREFRONTS



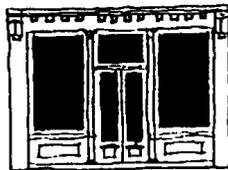
Early to Mid 1800s

- Post and beam frame
- Divided display windows
- Simple decoration



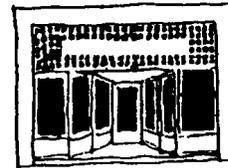
Late 1800s to Early 1900s

- Simple cornice
- Transom windows
- Recessed entrance



Mid to Late 1800s

- Boldly decorated cornice
- Cast iron columns
- Large display windows



Early 1900s to 1930s

- Metal window frames
- Structural glass
- Recessed entrance

Storefronts are the most visible part of the building facade but, unfortunately, are frequently altered with incompatible and inappropriate changes. Rehabilitation of storefronts in Downtown Grafton will be critical in establishing an historic and pedestrian character for the Downtown. The following guidelines should assist in storefront design and help to harmonize storefront improvements with the remainder of the building:

- If a building has an intact, original storefront, it should be preserved and repaired with little alternation. Where some alternations have been made, the facade should be examined to determine what original structural members and detailing remain. As much of the original material should be preserved as possible.
- If the existing storefront design has been remodeled and the new appearance has architectural interest, care should be taken to retain this later character. The removal of good recent design to reveal or restore a mediocre original facade should be discouraged.
- The use of storefront design themes that are either historically incorrect or unrelated to the downtown character should be avoided (Colonial, Wild West, Swiss Chalet, etc.) Larger buildings with two or more storefronts that serve multiple tenants should be designed as a single unit. Storefront details such as signs, awnings, or lighting may be personalized for individual tenants.

Upper Facade

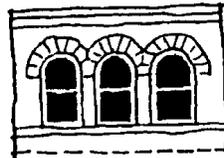
Generally, the upper facades in Downtown Grafton have retained their historic integrity while the storefronts have been altered. Where upper facades have been altered, the building owner should attempt to bring back the original design elements and materials, even if it is not a “restoration” of the original. The building owner should avoid altering, concealing or removing historic details when renovating the upper facade of older buildings.

TYPICAL UPPER FACADES



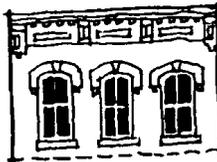
Early to Mid 1800s

- Simple Cornice
- Lintels over windows
- Small window panes



Late 1800s to Early 1900s

- Corbelled brick cornice
- Large, arched windows



Mid to Late 1800s

- Boldly decorated cornice
- Window hoods
- 2-over-2 windows

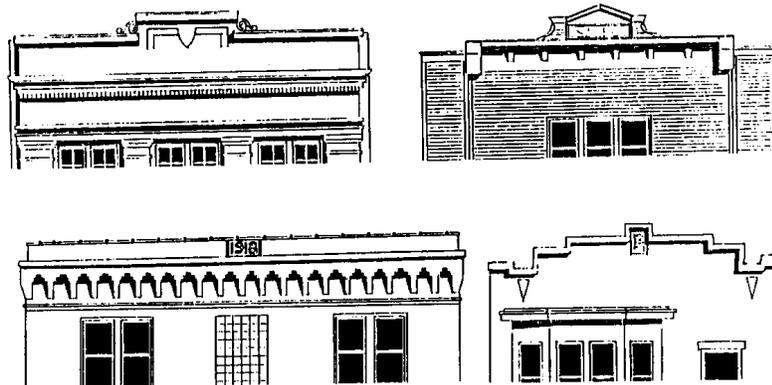


Early 1900s to 1930s

- Simple brick cornice
- Large window openings with multiple units

Cornice

The cornice is the projected moulding at the uppermost termination of the building facade. Early designers were particularly concerned with how a building met the sky and fancifully conceived cornices to crown their building designs. Original cornices that are still intact should be repaired and retained and care should be taken to protect the cornice from deterioration because of the fragile nature of the cornice materials. Cornices are one of the key design features of many buildings in Downtown Grafton and the addition of a simple cornice to a the building will help the building fit better into the context of the street.



Historic Blockface

The historic blockface maintained a compatible relationship between adjoining structures in terms of window sill and header lines, proportions of window and door openings, horizontal or vertical emphasis, and architectural detail and the relationship of the building facade to the neighborhood buildings. Exterior remodeling should be designed to consider the entire building facade and the relationship of the building facade to the neighboring buildings. The ground floor exterior should be designed to harmonize with the stories.



Existing



Proposed

BUILDING ELEMENTS

In addition to the three main components of the building facade, buildings in Downtown Grafton have several design elements that collectively determine the character of the building. Design guidelines are provided to identify the desired treatment and relationship for each of the following building elements.

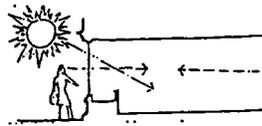
- Window displays
- Entrance doors
- Upper windows
- Exterior materials
- Exterior surface features
- Porches
- Roofs
- Painting and color
- Awnings and canopies
- Signage
- Rear entrances, off-street parking and sides of buildings
- Landscaping

Window Displays

Storefront window displays are important features in the downtown streetscape environment and a key part of the retail marketing strategy for the Downtown. Large street level windows displays should be retained or recovered in building rehabilitation and new construction projects. Storefront windows should be created where they do not currently exist, particularly along the principal pedestrian streets in Downtown Grafton (Bridge Street, 12th Avenue, Wisconsin Avenue and Washington Street) to attract the interest of passing viewers. Window displays should exhibit products in a simple, uncluttered and interesting way. Transom windows that are covered should be exposed. Covering or painting transom windows upsets the design relationship of the facade and destroys the rhythm of repeating patterns along the street.



- Maximize window space for display.
Recess doors for accent.
- Consider awnings for climate control, color, and accent.
- Keep windows transparent to allow customer contact and interior light.



Entrance Doors

Original entrance doors should be retained and repaired and refinished whenever possible. Original doors with their gracefully proportioned glass openings, lintels, sills, pediments and ornamental character will add to the aesthetic and functional values of the building and should be retained.

Upper Windows

Upper window replacements should fill the original openings. Where all or part of the window must be blocked, a dark opaque panel behind the window should be used to preserve the appearance of the opening. Original window openings should not be concealed and the size, proportion and rhythm of original window and doors should not be altered. Dark frames (eg. anodized bronze) should be selected when replacing storefronts and upper story windows. Avoid clear aluminum finishes on older storefronts.

Exterior Materials

Resurface frame buildings with wood siding to match the original materials. Thin board vinyl siding maybe used to replicate the original clapboard but should be carefully installed. New siding should not conceal important building details. It should also be noted that vinyl siding does not make a building maintenance free. Rather, it may simply hide, or even encourage deterioration such as rot or termite infestation.

Wood clapboard siding, on the other hand, if properly maintained, can be an excellent and nearly permanent siding material that adds to the aesthetic and economic value of the building. Buildings owners are encouraged to consider the long-term investment in painting and wood conservation.

Original masonry and stone should be retained and original mortar should be duplicated in composition, color, texture and joint profile. Refacing buildings with artificial stone, brick veneer, asbestos or asphalt shingles is inappropriate.

The selected building materials and colors should complement the building character and be compatible with other adjoining buildings.

Exterior Surface Features

Significant architectural features should be retained and missing features such as cornices, moldings, decorative coursing, etc., should be replaced, if possible. Avoid cluttering the primary building facade with sign brackets, wiring, meter boxes, gutters, downspouts and extraneous ornamentation that will detract from the character of the building. If these features are necessary, they should be painted in a color that blends with the building and neutralizes their appearance.

Porches

Porches and steps that are appropriate to the building character and development should be retained. Porches and steps that are inappropriate to the building's historic development and style should be removed or reconstructed. Do not enclose porches and steps if it detracts from the character and appearance of the building.

Roofs

Strive to preserve the original roof shape and the character of the original roofing materials when these elements are visible features of the building. Necessary alterations to the roof design should be compatible with the scale, proportion and character of the building. Preserve the architectural features that give the roof its essential character such as dormer windows, cupolas, cornices, brackets, chimneys, weather vanes, etc.

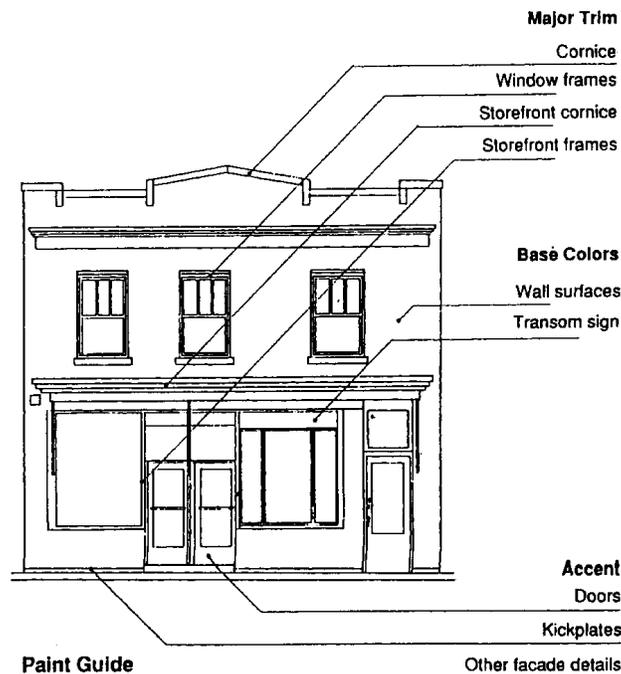
Painting and Color

Painting the building facade can be one of the least expensive ways to create architectural interest and character and improve the building's appearance. Painting is also a cost effective way to protect wood against deterioration. Paint should only be applied to trim features of masonry and stone buildings. Masonry and stone buildings should rely on their natural appearance for distinction with accent trim colors used to complement the natural materials. Masonry and stone surfaces should be cleaned rather than painted.

While storefront color selection is ultimately a personal decision, it should be given careful consideration. A storefront color scheme should complement the materials colors found in the building and should be carried through to the upper facade to provide unity. Colors of adjoining buildings should also be considered when selecting a color scheme so that all storefronts in a blockface are visually coordinated.

Simple color schemes with up to three colors are generally considered to be most appropriate. Highly contrasting or bright colors should be avoided except for small areas of trim. Although business owners are encouraged to choose colors which they feel best express the image desired for their business, softer "period" colors are recommended.

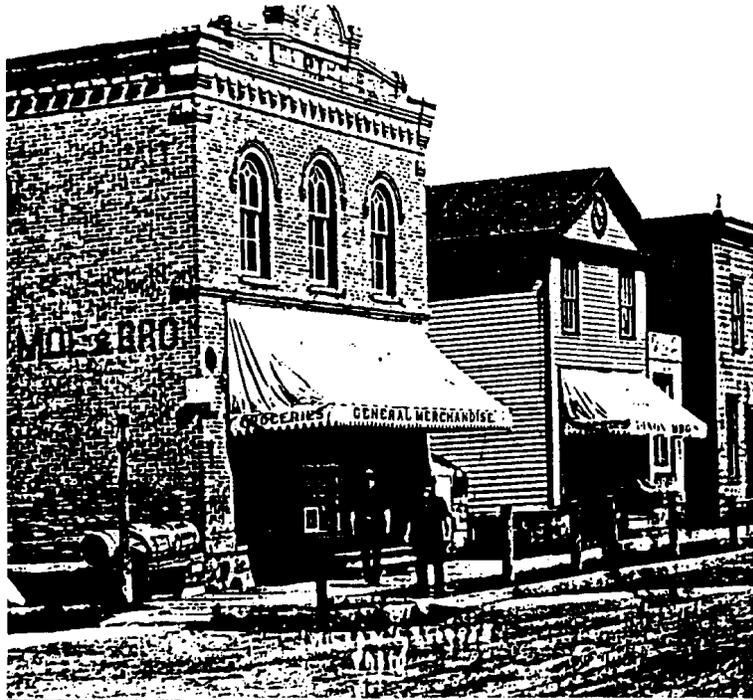
When selecting paint colors, always examine the paint chips under natural light conditions. Semigloss and flat latex paints are preferred. The paint guide illustration below provides general guidelines for a three-color paint scheme.



Awnings and Canopies

Canopies and awnings were historically provided for the protection of pedestrians and for the shading of retail windows. Awnings are both visually and functionally appropriate for many commercial storefronts but awning size, color, material and placement should complement the architectural character of the building. Soft, weather - treated canvas or vinyl materials which allow for flexible or fixed installation are recommended. Aluminum awnings, suspended metal canopies or fixed "mansard" projections should be avoided. Loud, primary colors and backlit awnings should also be avoided.

Awnings should have a traditional angled appearance rather than a curved, vaulted, or semi-spherical configuration. Signage applied to awnings should be simple, durable and attractive. Messages should be removable (i.e. sewn on letters) so that signage can be changed when the retail tenant changes without damaging the awning. Letters should be applied to the valance or skirt of the awnings. Lettering on the sloping area of the awning is not recommended.



Signage

Signs are a necessary part of any business district. Signs provide individual businesses with identification and contribute to the individual business image. Signs are also useful in indexing the goods and services offered in the downtown area. Building signage can play significant role in creating an attractive visual character for the business district. However, many signs in commercial areas are excessive in size and inappropriately placed on the building facade. General guidelines for how building signage can complement the visual character of the building and the adjoining streetscape include the following:

- Signs should be placed in appropriate locations on the building facade that fit the building scale and do not conceal significant architectural features. The best areas for sign placement will be those places which contain continuous flat surfaces such as lintel strips and transom panels above storefronts. The size of the signage area should determine the size of the sign and lettering. Upper facade signs should be avoided because they will draw attention away from the storefront area which should be the focal point of the building facade.



- Window signs which incorporate painted letters, decals, or other window graphics can identify and add character to storefront windows. Window signs should not obscure the display area. The color of window signs should contrast with the display background such as light colored letters or gold leafed letters with dark borders.
- A good sign should express a simple, clear message. Lettering should be legible and materials and colors should be selected which relate to exterior building materials and colors. If the message is simple, it will be easier to read by the passing motorist and pedestrians. Use key words to identify the business, avoiding wordy and excessive messages that will clutter the sign and interfere with the primary message.

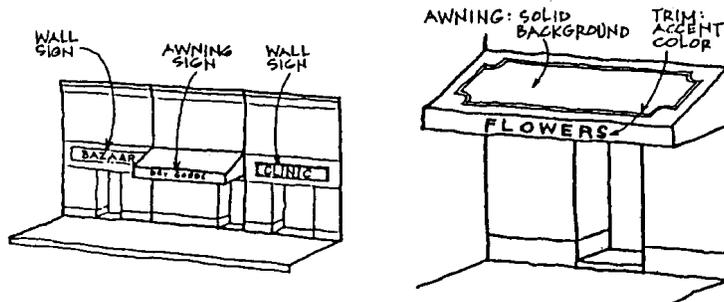
Futura
Times
Univers
News Gothic
Helvetica
Clarendon

EXAMPLES OF APPROPRIATE
TYPEFACES

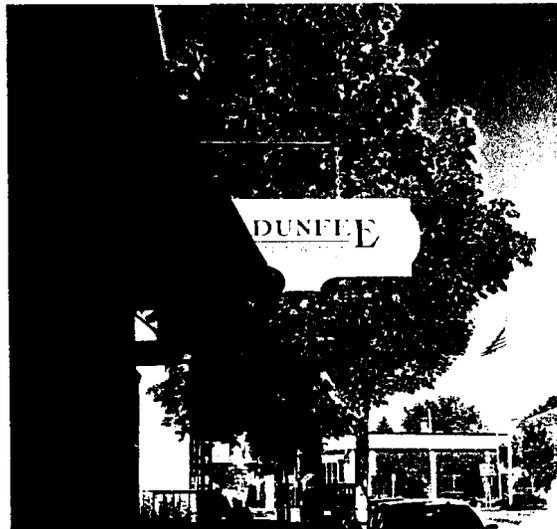
SIMPLE SIGN

LIGHT COLOR LETTERS
(HIGH CHROMA)
ON
DARK COLOR BACKGROUND
(LOW CHROMA)

- Awnings can serve as a signage surface with contrasting letters applied to the valance or skirt of the awning. Lettering on the sloping portion of awnings should be avoided.



- Small, well-designed projecting signs that complement the building use, character and streetscape environment are encouraged to add interest and variety. Three dimensional symbols such as the jewelers clock were once very common in Downtown and are still appropriate. Larger projecting signs, manufactured brand name signs and plastic signs should be avoided.

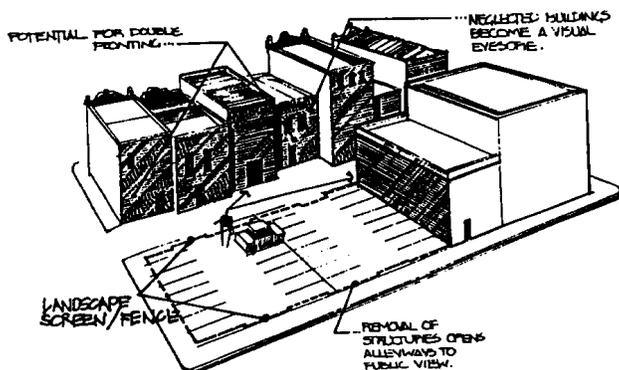


- Free standing signs should be appropriately scaled to the building and the pedestrian and designed to complement the building and streetscape character.

- The color of the signage should be compatible with the exterior colors of the storefront. Keep the color scheme simple with three colors or less. Avoid loud and obtrusive colors that overpower the building and streetscape character.
- Lighting on signs should be unobtrusive. If signs need to be illuminated, external light sources that are shielded from view and reduce glare should be used. Backlit and flashing signs should be avoided.
- Older, hand crafted or hand painted signs that still exist as part of the facade should be evaluated as part of the building's historic character and appropriately preserved.
- Temporary window signs announcing grand openings, seasonal sales or special promotional events are often a necessary part of the window display. When temporary signs are used, keep the message content simple. Temporary signs should not dominate the window display. As a general rule, temporary window signs should occupy less than 15% of the total glass area of any individual display window.
- When a business activity concludes, the business owner should be responsible for removal of all signs in a timely manner.

Off-street Parking, Rear Entrances and Sides of Buildings

Commercial alleys and the rear sides of existing buildings that are used as retail entrances should have an attractive visual appearance. Off-street parking and service areas should be landscaped and screened. All building sides that are visible from the public right of way should complement the primary building facade and be maintained in an attractive appearance.



Rear Entrance

Landscaping

Downtown Grafton includes many free standing buildings that are set back from the street with side yards and rear yards visible from the public right of way. Attractive landscaping should be provided in these areas to complement the building and streetscape character.

NEW CONSTRUCTION

New infill construction should be designed to honestly reflect the building's specific use and architectural period while maintaining a unified appearance with adjoining buildings. Designs that copy historic appearance are discouraged. Blank facades with very little detail should be avoided. The mass, volume and height of new infill buildings should be compatible with neighboring buildings. This is true of continuous blockfaces or blockfaces with a series of detached buildings.



The proposed facades for new or remodeled buildings should relate to neighboring buildings in terms of window sill or header lines, proportion of window and door openings, horizontal or vertical emphasis, and architectural detail.



Demolition should occur only when buildings are found to be structurally unsound or physically incapable of supporting a viable use. If demolition occurs, the resulting void should be designed to maintain the architectural rhythm and character of the blockface.

GUIDELINES FOR BUILDING MAINTENANCE

Building maintenance is an important part of the downtown revitalization effort. A downtown area must be well cared for to provide a positive image to customers. Clean and attractive buildings will express a positive identity and image for the Downtown and promote the Downtown as a viable retail district. The following maintenance and renovation guidelines are recommended for existing buildings and storefronts:

- Cleaning a building is an inexpensive way to maintain a building in good condition. Before cleaning, unwanted signs or other facade materials should be removed and all surfaces should be appropriately prepared..
- Masonry and stone buildings should be cleaned with the gentlest possible method such as low pressure soap and water or special chemical cleaners. Soft natural bristle brushes should be used. Brick and stone buildings should never be sandblasted. The sandblasting process scrapes off the outer protective glaze of the brick and exposes the softer inner brick to deterioration. Avoid painting masonry or brick.
- Simple streetscape maintenance such as landscaping, sweeping and regular trash collection is important to present a positive streetscape image. Both tenants and the owners are equally responsible for maintenance of their building entrances and adjoining walkways and terraces.
- Vacant storefronts and lots visible from public right of way should be maintained in an attractive appearance.

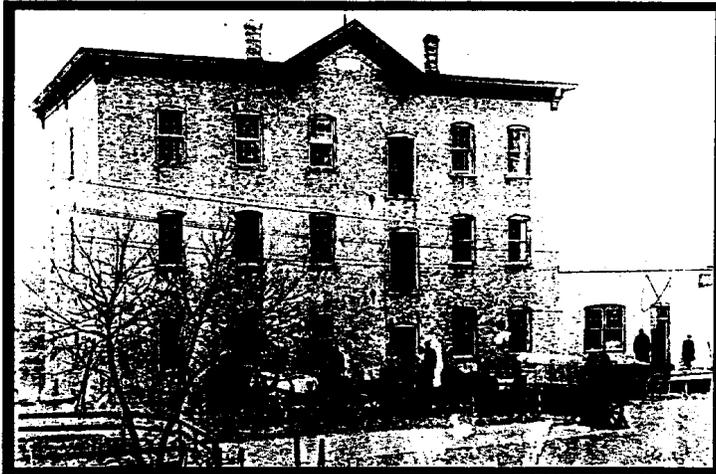
APPLICATION OF DESIGN GUIDELINES

Building owners in Downtown Grafton are encouraged to investigate how their buildings were originally designed and detailed as a starting point for making building improvements. Building owners should refer to historic photos to identify the building's original historic character and the key architectural features that are altered or missing. These features should be incorporated into future renovations to restore the building's historic integrity. While priority attention should be given to these features, comprehensive restoration of the building's historic materials, colors and fenestration is desirable. The following examples are provided to help identify key architectural features of several buildings in Downtown Grafton.

The Grafton Woolen Mill

Key features to be restored

Roof pediment; ornamental building cornice; building entrance



Historic photo

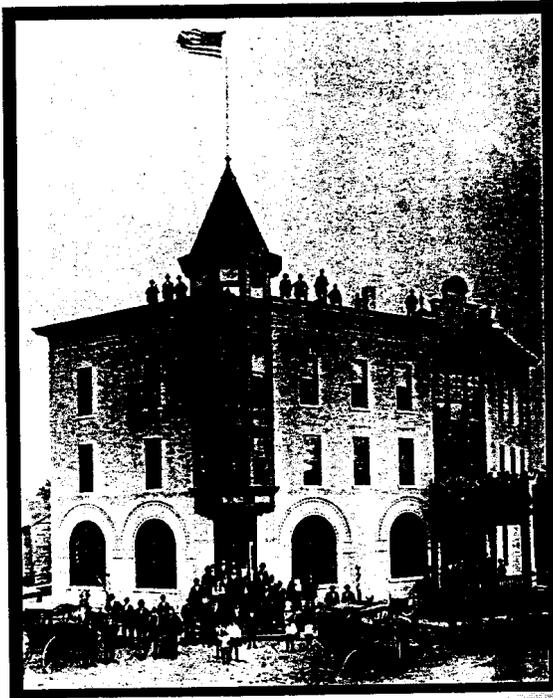


Recent photo

The Grafton Hotel

Key features to be restored

Polygonal corner turret with window detailing and conical roof; corner building entrance; Wisconsin Avenue entrance porch and roof pediment.



Historic photo

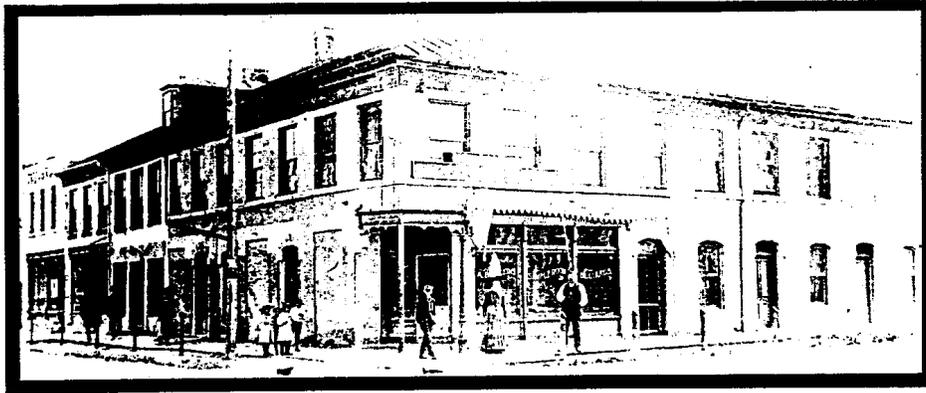


Recent photo

The Old Courthouse (Club Bananas)

Key features to be restored

Corner entrance; storefront window displays; building cornice; standing seam roof



Historic photo



Recent photo

Grafton Post Office (Grafton Sub Shop)

Key features to be restored

Historic storefront and building entrance



Historic photo

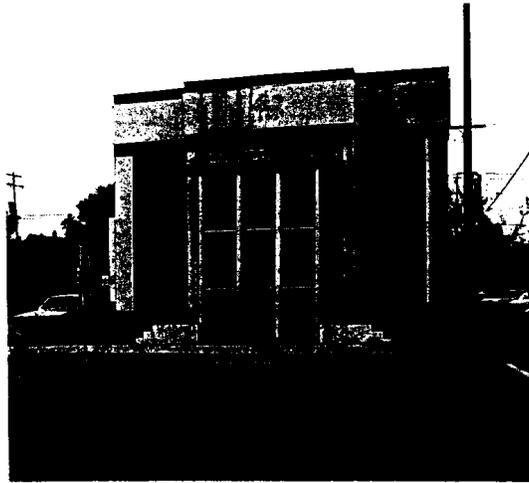


Recent photo

Downtown Grafton is fortunate to have many recent remodelings that can serve as good examples for building owners to follow in their future building renovations. The following examples of recent building renovations illustrate the sensitive application of the design guidelines presented in this report. The results of these renovations include a stronger historic character and a more pleasing and harmonious streetscape environment for Downtown Grafton. Building owners responsible for these renovations can serve as valuable resources to other building owners regarding the renovation process, costs, technical issues, professional design assistance, etc.

Moraine Environmental Building

Removal of the contemporary metal facing and building cornice has restored the historic character of the former Grafton State Bank building. The new renovation has recreated an historic focal point for the important Five Points intersection.



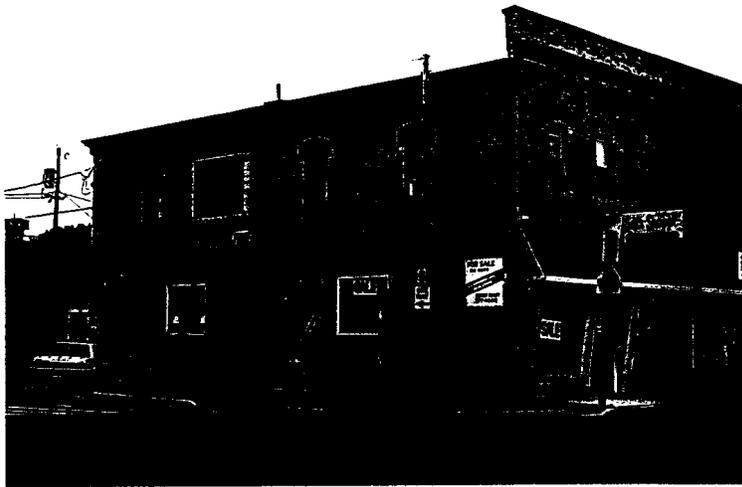
Before restoration



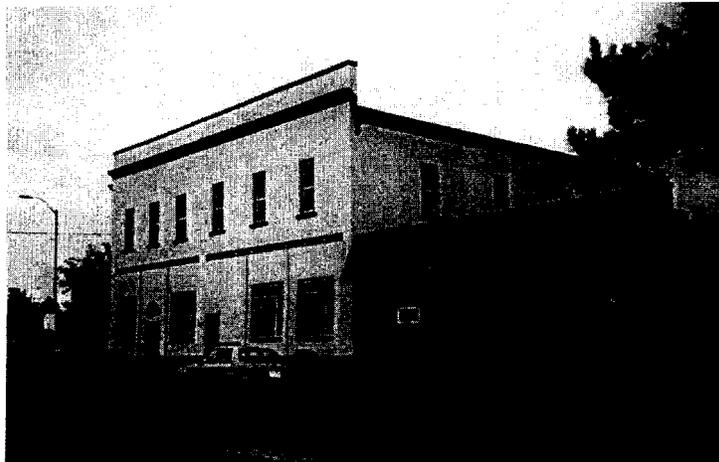
After restoration

La Budde Grain Company Building

The character of the 12th Avenue streetscape and Five Points intersection has been improved with the renovation of the La Budde Grain Company building. Key improvements include the removal of a contemporary storefront and construction of a unified building character with coordinated upper and ground level façades, materials, detailing and colors. The renovation of the adjoining one-story antique store is also a good example of how a new infill block building can complement an existing historic building. The new building storefront follows traditional storefront design principles regarding window displays, entrance door, building signage, and colors.



Before restoration



After restoration

O'Connell's Pub Building

The recent renovation of O'Connell's Pub has resulted in a new building character that complements the historic character of the downtown and presents a pleasing appearance for the Wisconsin Avenue streetscape. New windows and doors, new siding, a coordinated color scheme, removal of a manufactured plastic sign, and a unified building character are key features of this attractive renovation.



Before restoration



After restoration