

## Downtown District Guidelines

The northwest corner of the Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard is to be developed with an emphasis on maintaining the historic and cultural significance of Belle Plaine. Meridian and Main Streets should meet at a four way stop that heralds entry to the historic downtown. Signage along Meridian and Main Streets should indicate significant historic and cultural places in downtown. The northwest corner of the Belle Plaine Commercial Boulevard should maintain the same grid pattern as the rest of the town. A pedestrian and bike trail should follow Meridian and Main Streets and lead into the historic downtown.

### Objectives

- To preserve the historic character, pedestrian orientation and architectural commonality amongst buildings of downtown Belle Plaine through the application of design standards in the public realm and suggested design guidelines in the private realm.

### Policies

- The City of Belle Plaine finds that the historical, architectural, business, and cultural heritage of the Downtown District is among the City's most important assets. Therefore, the City will engage in a program that encourages the preservation of historic properties and architecture through sensitive renovation following design guidelines.
- The City of Belle Plaine will maintain and enhance the pedestrian-friendly character of the Downtown District by adhering to design standards that provide features such as pedestrian-safe sidewalk and street crossings, attractive streetscaping, and context sensitive signage, among others.

### Additional Notes

- Recognizing that each project is unique in its relationship to the site and surroundings, the Urban Design Review Committee will endeavor to interpret the guidelines within the Design Manual for the most appropriate application.

### Guidelines

**Pedestrian Oriented Streetscape** - The streetscape should be uniform so that it acts to provide continuity throughout the downtown. Maintaining a minimum sidewalk width of 12 feet should be considered on both Main Street and Meridian Street in the Downtown District. This width allows for a minimum six feet for pedestrian passage and six feet for boulevard tree planting. Where this width does not currently exist every attempt will be made to provide it during city infrastructure upgrades. (Figure 20 - located at the end of the section.)

- Approved boulevard trees shall be located as feasible and appropriate to soften

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the character of the building massing and to provide shade for pedestrians.

- Painted crosswalks, where feasible, should be considered at intersections to enhance the visibility and safety of pedestrians crossing the streets.
- Diagonal parking will be maintained to provide adequate parking for visitors to the Downtown District, to minimize the visual impact of the wide street surfaces, and to calm traffic.



Figure 21. Intersection of Main and Meridian Streets Aerial, Color Ortho Photo, Farm Services Administration, 2003.

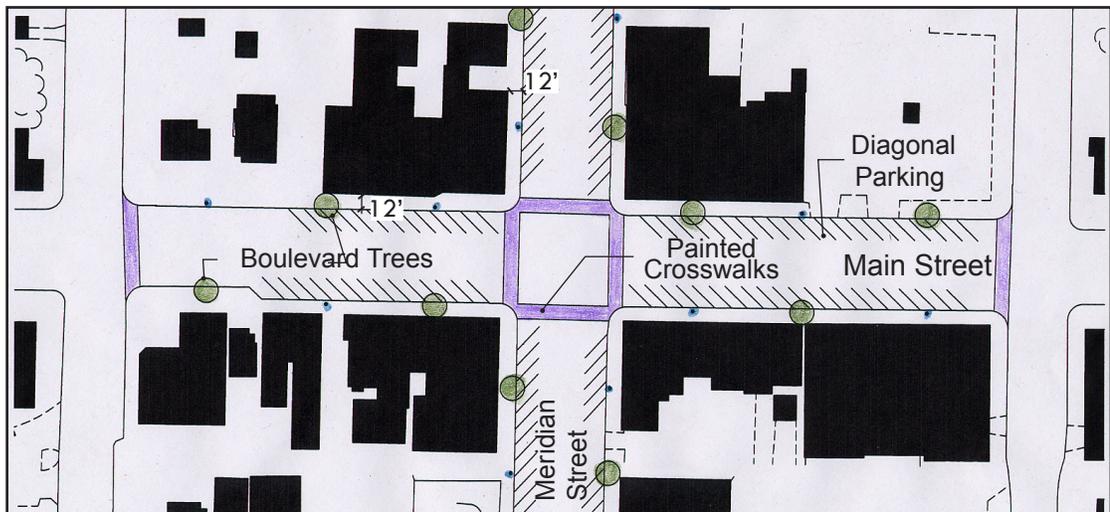


Figure 22. Intersection of Main and Meridian Streets Guidelines Plan, CRD, 2008.

**Private Sector Landscape Elements** - Benches, planting containers, flower boxes, fencing, trash receptacles or trash enclosures, should be compatible to historic character of the district.



*Good example of operable awning that are compatible with the historic character of the architecture.*

Figure 23. Urban Landscape Elements, Wayzata Design Standards, 2004.

**Awnings** – Awnings should enhance the historic feel of downtown, while providing sun protection for display windows, shelter for pedestrians, and a sign panel for businesses.

- Retractable or operable awnings are encouraged.
- Long expanses of awning should be broken into segments that reflect the door or window openings beneath them.
- Backlit awnings are discouraged
- Awnings with graphic material must be within the sign guide lines below.



*Good example of operable awning that are compatible with the historic character of the architecture.*

Figure 24. Awning Example, Wayzata Design Standards, 2004.

**Signage** - Signs should be architecturally compatible with the style, composition, materials, colors and details of the building and with other signs on nearby buildings, while providing for adequate identification of the business.

- Symbolic and historic three-dimensional signs such as barber shop poles and appropriately-sized projecting signs are encouraged.
- Projecting signs must be no greater than 12 square feet and have a maximum width of three feet and cannot extend beyond the first floor of the building.
- No less than 10 feet of clearance shall be provided between the sidewalk elevation and the lowest point of the projecting sign.
- Maximum distance between sign and building face is one foot.
- Building and signage lighting must be indirect, with the light source(s) hidden from direct pedestrian and motorist view.
- Lighting and signage must be a separate and distinct. Combined lighting and signage is not encouraged.

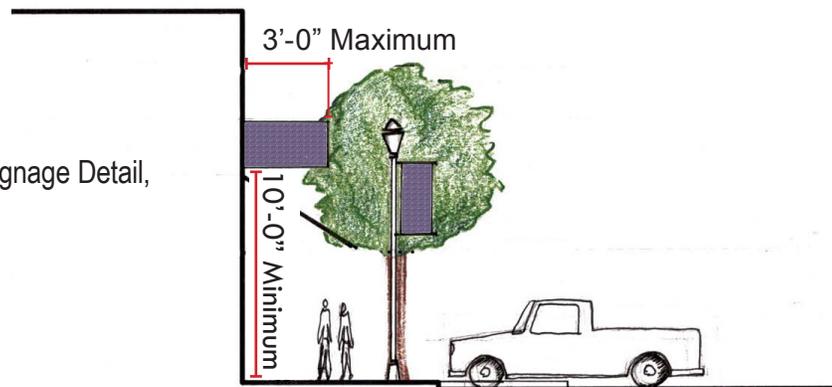
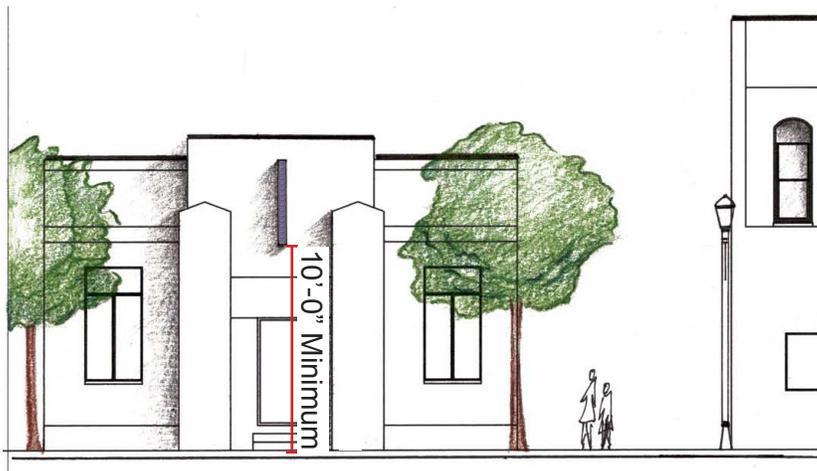


Figure 25A and B. Signage Detail, CRD, 2008.



Figure 27. Signage Example, Wayzata Design Guidelines, 2004.



Figure 26. Signage Example, Wayzata Design Guidelines, 2004.



Figure 28. Signage Example, Stillwater Design Manual, 2006.



Figure 29. Signage Example, Rhinebeck, NY, Project for Public Spaces.

**Roofs and Parapets<sup>1</sup>** - Rooflines should mimic the separate yet complementary rhythm of historic downtown buildings.

- Flat roofs (slightly sloped to drain) are preferred with parapets that articulate the rhythm of the buildings.
- Parapets should be embellished with brick detailing and stepped or sloped to achieve a visually interesting yet harmonious sequence along the building façade.
- Difference in buildings heights should not exceed 1/2 a story.



Figure 30. Roof Articulation Example, Stillwater Design Manual, 2006.



Figure 31. Parapet Embellishment Example, Stillwater Design Manual, 2006.

1 Parapet: Decorative top of a building. Wayzata Design Guidelines, 2004. Any low protective wall or barrier at the edge of a balcony, roof, bridge, or the like. Dictionary.com

**Building Width** – Building widths should be designed to break up the monotonous appearance of long facades. A building more than 45 feet in width should be divided into increments of no more than 45 feet through articulation of the façade. This can be achieved through combinations of the following techniques:

- Divisions or breaks in materials
- Window bays
- Separate entrances and entry treatments
- Variation in roof lines (within guidelines)
- Building setbacks (within guidelines)

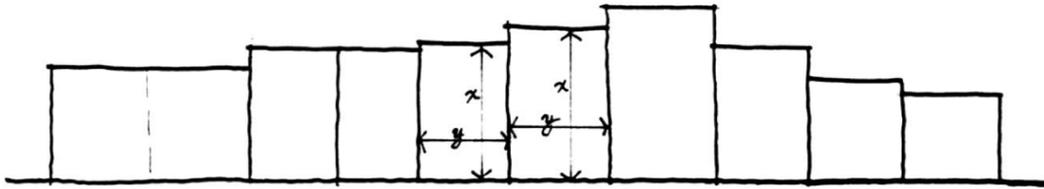


Figure 32. Building Width Articulation Example, Stillwater Design Manual, 2006.

**Windows** – Windows should encourage large, open views into the commercial space enhancing the pedestrian experience by providing a visual connection to the use inside the building.

- The restoration or renovation of a storefront should attempt to return the façade to its original character. Preserve original materials or details and the shape and size of original window openings.
- On upper levels, windows should provide privacy while aesthetically and functionally serving the building.



Figure 33. Large Windows Example, Wayzata Design Guidelines, 2004.



Figure 34. Functional Windows Example, Wayzata Design Guidelines, 2004.

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**Color** – The varied but complimentary use of color is encouraged.

- The color of buildings should complement the adjacent buildings' colors
- The color of brick or other natural building materials should dictate the color family choice.
- Buildings should use primarily earth tones with light and bright colors used only as minor accents.
- The accent colors should complement the primary color.



Figure 35. Color and accent Example, Main Street Iowa 20 Year Report, 2005.

**Materials and Details** - Rehabilitation or redevelopment projects should be constructed to be long lasting and use materials and detailing that maintains the distinct character and harmony of the downtown.

- Traditional materials including brick, stone (including cast stone) and stucco should be used as the primary building materials.
- Tile, stone, glass block, copper flashing, metal and wood should be considered for accent materials.
- Building renovation and alterations should restore architectural details of cornices, brickwork, transom, display windows and bulkheads.
- Infill construction should reflect some of the detailing of surrounding buildings in window shape, cornice lines and brick work.

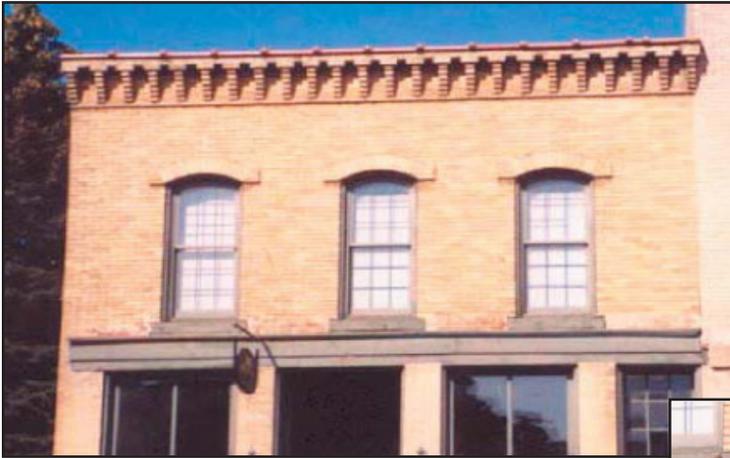


Figure 36. Good Detail Example, Wayzata Design Guidelines, 2004.



Figure 37. Good Detail Example, Wayzata Design Guidelines, 2004.

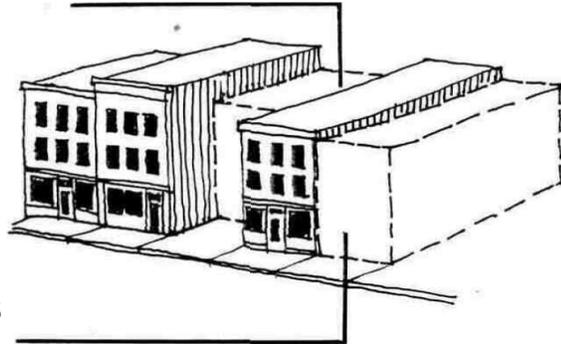


Figure 38. More Detail Needed Example, Wayzata Design Guidelines, 2004.

**Setbacks** - Buildings in the historic downtown district should work together to give the effect of a traditional “Main Street” area.

- New construction and infill buildings must maintain the alignment of facades along the sidewalk edge.
- Exceptions may be granted if the setback is pedestrian-oriented and contributes to the quality and character of the streetscape.

AVOID SETBACK FROM  
ADJACENT BUILDINGS



BUILD IN LINE WITH  
ADJACENT BUILDINGS

Figure 39. Building Setback Example, Stillwater Design Manual, 2006.

**Lighting** - Lighting in the downtown should serve to illuminate façades, entrances and signage and provide an adequate level of personal safety while enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the buildings.

- Street lighting will be pedestrian scale and provide for safe pedestrian travel at night.
- Building and signage lighting must be indirect, with the light source(s) hidden from direct pedestrian and motorist view.
- Lighting and signage must be a separate and distinct. Combined lighting and signage is not encouraged.

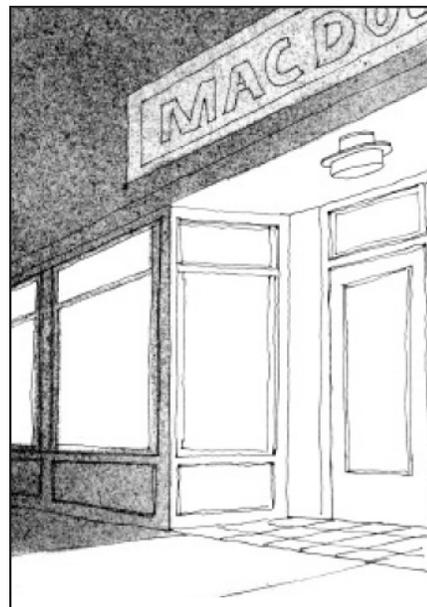


Figure 40. Indirect Light Example, City of Minneapolis, Facade Design Guide.

**Fencing** - Fences, walls, and gates serve aesthetic and functional roles and define the character of residential and commercial areas within Belle Plaine's Central Business District. In the B-3 Central Business District, proposals for new fences to enhance the site, improve security, or increase privacy are reviewed in terms of their siting and their design. The compatibility of proposed materials, height, configuration, scale, detail, and finish with other structures in the district shall be reviewed as is the proposed configuration for the specific site.

- New fences and gates shall avoid compromising the authenticity of the Downtown and adjacent properties.
- Fences and gates in front yards and street side yards (corner lots) shall be:
  - Of an open design such as picket;
  - Non-opaque meaning passersby can easily see through the fence and a visual connection between the sidewalk and area behind the fence can easily be maintained;
  - Composed of painted wood, traditional iron, or aluminum reminiscent of wrought or cast iron if pertaining to a residential use;
  - Composed of traditional iron or aluminum reminiscent of wrought or cast iron if pertaining to a non-residential use;
  - In horizontal alignment with existing fences and/or the sidewalk edge, unless the City finds a further setback contributes to the pedestrian experience and quality/character of the streetscape;
  - Harmonious with and reflective of the color palette employed in the immediate vicinity and the principal structure;
  - Designed with colors and elements which blend in with existing features as opposed to drawing attention to the fence or gate as a design element of the site;
  - Generally be of modest design detail similar to those historically found within the City as opposed to elaborate ornamental detailing; and,
  - Generally no greater than three and a half (3 ½) to four (4) feet in height.
- The following are not permitted within the B-3 Central Business District:
  - Fences, gates, or walls composed of non-traditional iron, post and rail or split rail type, chicken wire, barbed wire, concertina wire, round tubing, and similar materials, and above-ground electric fences.
  - Chain link fences or privacy fences in front yards and street side yards of corner lots.
  - Retaining walls within the 100 block of Main Street, the 100 block of Church Street, the 100 block of Meridian Street South, or the 100 or 200 block of Meridian Street North.
  - Fences which are more opaque may be used to screen service areas, mechanical equipment, and dumpsters for commercial uses in the B-3

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Central Business District. Said service areas, mechanical equipment, and dumpsters shall be located out of view from public streets and sidewalks.

- Chain Link:
  - Chain link fences are not appropriate for front yards or side yards that face streets.
  - Chain link fences may be acceptable in rear yards or side yards where not visible from the street.
  - The painting of visible sections of chain link fences in dark green, dark brown, or black colors is encouraged.
  - The screening of chain link fences with hedge, ivy, or other vining cover is encouraged.
- Privacy Fencing:
  - Privacy fencing is not allowed in a front yard or a side yard facing a public street.
  - Privacy fencing may be appropriate for interior side and rear yards not facing a public street.
  - Privacy fencing consisting of vertical uprights are considered appropriate choices.
  - Privacy fencing materials and color should work in harmony with and be reflective of adjacent structures.
  - Privacy fencing materials considered appropriate choices are wood, vinyl, and composite.