

## APPENDIX III— Public Signage

Few communities in Minnesota have addressed the issue of public signage within or around historic districts. The community must balance the desire for a visually appealing downtown with the necessity to maintain the public's safety and to effectively direct traffic flow. As a rule, public signage should be clear and use conventional shapes, colors, and reflectivity. Public signage falls into three categories: traffic signs, limit signs, and directional/informational signs.

### **Traffic Signs**

Traffic signs are the most critical to downtown Northfield. They ensure a smooth and orderly flow of traffic and minimize the possibility of accidents. They must conform to the *Minnesota Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MMUTCD) from the Minnesota Department of Transportation. While considerably limited, there is some latitude in the design of these signs. Determining minimum requirements and reducing redundancy is necessary to making Downtown Northfield more attractive.

### **Limit Signs**

Limit signs, such as parking limits, handicap, and no parking zones, although not as critical to safety, still need to be visually pleasing. These signs also have more latitude in their design. They should be uniform in style. They should be prominently displayed and large enough to be easily read, but should not overpower their surroundings. Using professionally designed signs and posts and placement, the public signage can enhance the overall appearance of downtown Northfield.

### **Directional/Informational Signs**

Informational signs include historic district directions and announcements, public parking, and other directional information to guide people to key areas in downtown Northfield. These signs have little regulation and, therefore, the most latitude in design. They still need to be professionally designed, clear, and uniform with the other signage in downtown.

- Less is more. Using the least required signage in downtown will help keep the appearance from being cluttered or overpowering. Researching the minimum requirements and potential waivers is imperative for controlling the proliferation of public signage.
- All public signage within the Northfield Historic District needs to be uniform and of high quality design and construction.
- Signage can be effectively placed on existing decorative light posts and on well designed sign posts.
- Signage, as well as banners and other temporary displays, should be color coordinated with a limited palette of colors complementary to those used for the store awnings. Turn-of-the-century colors tended to be muted and earth-tone based. Most major paint companies have paint chip charts of "historical" colors.
- Uniform signage should be developed to identify all public parking lots. Signs should be large enough and prominently displayed, but not overpower the surroundings. Using an easily identifiable logo helps the motorist find their way to the lots.