

**NORTHFIELD DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT GUIDEBOOK**



**Bridge Square**



**Central Block Building**



**Division Street**

# NORTHFIELD DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT GUIDEBOOK

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Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission

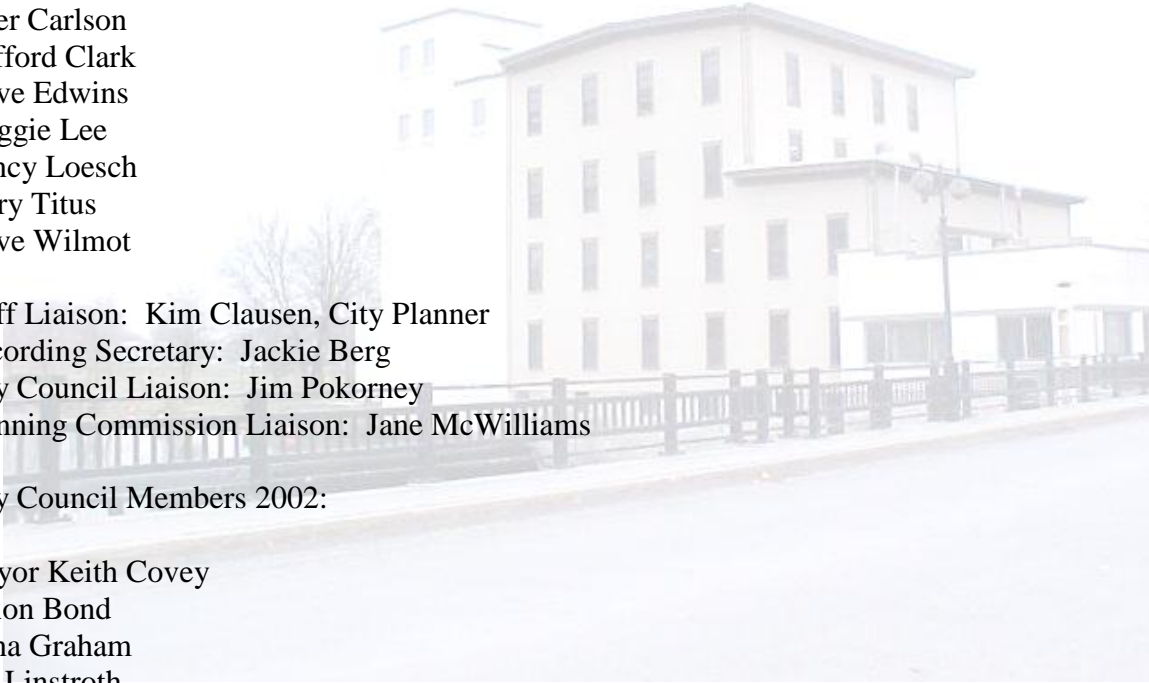
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## FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

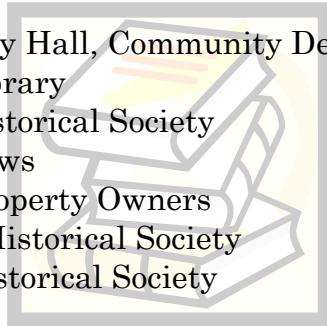
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# HISTORIC DOCUMENTATION RESOURCES



Documentation of the original appearance of a building is the most important starting point for undertaking renovations to an historic structure. Even photos taken from a distance tell much about what the building looked like. Photos from different eras may reveal the authenticity of additions and replacements which may be valuable representative designs from the time they were added. Old photos, newspaper articles and histories will help explain why the building has evolved to its present condition. Many resources exist to aid downtown property owners in finding historic photographs of Northfield, including:

- Northfield City Hall, Community Development Department
- Northfield Library
- Northfield Historical Society
- Northfield News
- Downtown Property Owners
- Rice County Historical Society
- Minnesota Historical Society



The former Northfield Downtown Guidebook from 1982 includes building histories and summarizes changes in use, notable events of the past and identifies unique characteristics of downtown buildings. In addition, the HPC's recent book, *Northfield: The History and Architecture of a Community* includes many historic photos downtown Northfield. Furthermore, the HPC maintains a file on each downtown building with historical chronologies and photographs where available. These documents are all available at the Community Development Department office in City Hall.

The Northfield Library also has many photographs and keeps a record of when each building has been mentioned in old newspaper articles. Early Sanborn insurance maps on display in the library show the buildings and occupants about once every decade each side of the turn of the century. Another useful resource is the downtown walking tour audio cassette available at the Historical Society, which contains useful historical and architectural information about downtown buildings.

# BRICK AND MASONRY



The dominant building material visible in downtown Northfield is brick. There is also stone masonry and stone used as part of the brick walls. This masonry is the downtown's greatest resource. The way it is maintained, preserved and restored affects both the building life and aesthetics.

Brick and masonry should NEVER be sandblasted. Sandblasting removes the hard surface of the brick and exposes its softer interior to moisture and deterioration. There are ways to clean brick without damaging it. Even cleaning by the gentlest means possible should only be attempted after an overall preservation or restoration plan is thought-out, for the following reasons:

- Some cleaning methods will damage brick for life
- The “dirt” or brick may not react as expected
- The cleaning process is messy and can harm other building materials

Determine the reasons why the brick needs cleaning. A different technique may be needed for each reason, such as:

- Accumulation of dirt and pollution
- Stains from water where metal or wood are in contact with brick
- The need to paint or remove paint

The unwanted paint or dirt may be the original color of the brick with a “patina” of age. This old-brick look is highly valued and gives the building character.

However, unwanted paint or dirt which masks the aged brick color can be removed by washing techniques, each of which has advantages and disadvantages, and are described below.



## RECOMMENDED

- Identifying, retaining and preserving masonry features that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building such as walls, brackets, railings, cornices, pediments, steps and columns and details such as tooling and bonding patterns, coatings, and color.
- Protecting and maintaining masonry by providing proper drainage so that water does not stand on flat, horizontal surfaces or accumulate in curves decorative features.
- Cleaning masonry only when absolutely necessary, using the gentlest means possible, and only after an overall preservation or restoration plan is developed.
- Inspecting painted masonry surfaces to determine whether repainting is necessary.
- Repainting with colors that are historically appropriate to the building and district.
- Repairing masonry walls and other masonry features by repointing the mortar joints where there is evidence of deterioration such as disintegrating mortar, cracks in mortar joints, loose bricks, damp walls, or damaged plasterwork.
- Duplicating old mortar in strength, composition, color and texture.
- Duplicating old mortar joints in width and joint profile.
- Repairing masonry features by patching, piecing-in, or consolidating the masonry using recognized preservation methods.
- Applying new or non-historic surface treatments such as water-repellent coatings to masonry only after repointing and only if masonry repairs have failed to arrest water penetration problems.
- Replacing an entire masonry feature that is too deteriorated to repair – if the overall form and detailing are still evident – using the physical evidence as a model to reproduce the feature. If using the same kind of material is not technically or economically feasible, then a compatible substitute material may be considered.

## DISCOURAGED

- Removing or radically changing masonry features which are important in defining the overall historic character of the building so that, as a result, the character is diminished.
- Replacing or rebuilding a major portion of exterior masonry walls that could be repaired so that, as a result, the building is no longer historic and is essentially new construction.
- Applying paint or other coatings such as stucco to masonry that has been historically unpainted or uncoated to create a new appearance.
- Removing paint from historically painted masonry.
- Radically changing the type of paint or coating or its color.
- Failing to evaluate and treat the various causes of mortar joint deterioration such as leaking roofs or gutters, differential settlement of the building, capillary action or extreme weather exposure.
- Cleaning masonry surfaces when they are not heavily soiled to create a new appearance, consequently introducing chemicals or moisture into historic materials.
- Using a cleaning method that involves water or liquid chemical solutions when there is any possibility of freezing temperatures.
- Removing paint that is firmly adhering to, and thus protecting, masonry surfaces.
- Using methods of removing paint which are destructive to masonry, such as sandblasting, application of caustic solutions, or high pressure water-blasting.
- Using new paint colors that are inappropriate to the historic building and district.
- Failing to undertake adequate measures to assure the protection of masonry features.
- Removing non-deteriorated mortar from sound joints, then re-pointing the entire building to achieve a uniform appearance.
- Changing the width or joint profile when re-pointing.
- Patching concrete without removing the source of deterioration.
- Using a substitute material for the replacement part that does not convey the visual appearance of the surviving parts of the masonry feature or that is physically or chemically incompatible.
- Removing a masonry feature that is irreparable and not replacing it; or replacing it with a new feature that does not convey the same visual appearance.

# TECHNIQUES FOR CLEANING BRICK AND MASONRY

Preferred Methods

Acceptable Methods

Discouraged Methods

**WATER WASHING:** Water will dissolve and wash off the accumulation of soot and dirt. Water is the preferred cleaner because it is relatively easy to accomplish and does the least problems to the wall. However, brick and mortar can absorb large amounts of water which can expand the clays, or release soluble salts present in the masonry, or even freeze during cold periods. Water washing methods include the following techniques:

**SLOW WATER WASHING:** Water is run constantly down brick surfaces to absorb and rinse off dirt and pollution. It is done for days or weeks depending on the chemistry of the masonry and the water. Brick needing extra attention is gently scrubbed with fiber brushes to avoid scratching the brick. Wire brushes should not be used.

**LOW PRESSURE WASHING:** For most cleaning that is superficial, sprayed water will remove surface dirt and soiling. Water run through a fiber scrub brush for some mechanical removal of dirt is the most practical way for most small cleaning projects. Do not use high pressure water jets or spray, as the pressure can damage the brick and force water into the mortar joints.

**DETERGENT WASHING:** Either of the above washing methods can also make use of detergents. The purpose is to help breakdown the oily deposits so these may be carried away by the water. Rinse with clear water.

**STEAM CLEANING:** Steam accelerates the action of the water by the extreme heat and because the water vapor can penetrate films and paint. It is considered only if gentler means are not suitable, as steam can be dangerous to other materials as well as to the brick and mortar.

**CHEMICAL CLEANING:** The last resort in cleaning and the alternative to sandblasting of masonry for paint removal, is to use very diluted chemical solutions in a water washing method or with a different solvent. The “chemistry” used depends upon the type of brick and mortar present, and on the type(s) of paint present. This requires the professional help of an experienced masonry restoration contractor or an experienced architect.



**MECHANICAL OR ABRASIVE CLEANING:** Do not let anybody suggest sandblasting or other abrasive or wire brush cleaning methods on your valued exterior brick. Instead review the washing techniques listed above and determine what really is at stake and what can reasonably be accomplished. Abrasive cleaning will harm the tough exterior of the brick, and it will erode the crisp edges of brick patterns and cut stonework detail.

# WINDOWS



Windows are nearly always the most visible and important part of the historic character of a building, and Northfield is no exception. Perhaps nothing defines a building more, both from the exterior and interior, than windows, which is why these design features must be treated with extra care when preserving, repairing and replacing them.

## RECOMMENDED

- Identifying, retaining and preserving windows – and their functional and decorative features – that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building. Such features can include frames, sash, muntins, glazing, sills, heads, hoodmolds, paneled or decorated jambs and mouldings, and interior and exterior shutters and blinds.
- Conducting an in-depth survey of the conditions of existing windows early in rehabilitation planning so that repair and upgrading methods and possible replacement options can be fully explored.
- Protecting and maintaining the wood and architectural metal which comprise the window frame, sash, muntins, and surrounds through appropriate surface treatments such as cleaning, rust removal, limited paint removal, and re-application of protective coating systems.
- Making windows weather-tight by re-caulking and replacing or installing weatherstripping.
- Repairing window frames and sash by patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing. Such repair may also include replacement in kind of those parts that are either extensively deteriorated or are missing when there are surviving prototypes such as sash, sills, and interior and exterior shutters and blinds.
- Replacing an entire window that is too deteriorated to repair using the same sash and pane configuration and other design details. If using the same kind of material is not technically or economically feasible when replacing windows deteriorated beyond repair, then a compatible substitute material may be considered. Historic color duplication, retention of the same glass to frame ratio, matching of the historic reveal, and duplication of the frame width, depth, and such existing decorative details as arched tops should all be components in replacements for use on historic buildings.

## DISCOURAGED

- Removing or radically changing windows which are important in defining the historic character of the building so that, as a result, the character is diminished.
- Changing the number, location, size or glazing pattern of windows, through cutting new openings, blocking-in windows, and installing replacement sash that do not fit the historic window opening.
- Changing the historic appearance of windows through the use of inappropriate designs, materials, finishes, or colors which noticeably change the sash, depth of reveal, and muntin configuration; the reflectivity and color of the glazing; or the appearance of the frame.
- Obscuring historic window trim with metal or other material.
- Stripping windows of historic material such as wood, cast iron, and bronze.
- Replacing windows solely because of peeling paint, broken glass, stuck sash, and high air infiltration. These conditions, in themselves, are no indication that windows are beyond repair.
- Failing to provide adequate protection of materials on a regular basis so that deterioration of the windows results.
- Retrofitting or replacing windows rather than maintaining the sash, frame and glazing.
- Failing to undertake adequate measures to assure the protection of historic windows.
- Replacing an entire window when repair of materials and limited replacement of deteriorated or missing parts are appropriate.
- Failing to reuse serviceable window hardware such as brass sash lifts and sash locks.
- Using substitute material for the replacement part that does not convey the visual appearance of the surviving parts of the window or that is physically or chemically incompatible.
- Removing a character-defining window that is irreparable and blocking it in; or replacing it with a new window that does not convey the same visual appearance.

Specifically, the HPC offers the following recommendations for certain types of windows:

**WINDOWS AND ENERGY CONSERVATION:** Windows may one of the largest sources of heat or cooling losses to the outside. More insulation is possible by building-in air layers between sheets of glass, either by adding more glass to the inside, or by using insulated glass when remodeling the windows. Operable and transom windows are useful for natural cooling on moderately warm days, but they also need to be insulated glass and weather-stripped to prevent heat or cooling losses.

**WINDOW REPLACEMENT:** Display windows should be kept their original size or use lower and upper units to result in the same storefront window height. Even if this requires a high inner ceiling for a distance into the building it will retain the exterior elegance of the storefront and add a lot of light to the interior. Use two layer insulating glass, and check building codes regarding the necessity of tempered safety glass.

**STORM WINDOWS:** On upper windows consider adding storm windows to the inside along with repairing and repainting existing windows. Examples of this technique may be seen at the Arts Guild Building, and in the renovation of St. Olaf's Old Main Building. Placing storm panels on the inside avoids covering up the existing window pattern on the outside. There is no need to alter the significant exterior historic appearance of special patterns and carved detail so evident in the upper windows in downtown.

**WINDOW SASH REPLACEMENT:** Upper story windows may only need repair work, scraping, filling and painting to actually serve for many years. With interior storms the exterior aesthetics are retained and costs reduced. If the windows are deteriorated, then rebuild the sashes using insulating glass, and remount them with spring suspension hardware and good weather-stripping in the existing frames. This has proven to be less expensive than total window and it maintains the exterior window frame details which are costly to recreate today. Replacement window units should completely fill the original openings.



# STOREFRONTS



Storefronts are probably the most prominent and obvious component of historic commercial buildings. Most storefronts are a combination of entrance and surrounding window display area. A chief design goal is for the whole storefront to function well and also to be consistent in design with the whole building.

## RECOMMENDED:

- Identifying, retaining and preserving storefronts – and their functional and decorative features – that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building such as display windows, signs, doors, transoms, kick plates and corner posts. The removal of inappropriate, non-historic cladding, false mansard roofs and other later alterations can help reveal the historic character of a storefront.
- Protecting and maintaining masonry, wood, and architectural metals which comprise storefronts through appropriate treatments such as cleaning, rust removal, limited paint removal and reapplication of protective coating systems.
- Repairing storefronts by reinforcing the historic materials. Repairs will also generally include the limited replacement of those deteriorated or missing parts of storefronts where there are surviving prototypes such as transoms, kick plates, pilasters or signs.
- Replacing an entire storefront that is too deteriorated to repair – if the overall form and detailing are still evident – using the physical evidence as a model. If using the same material is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials may be considered.

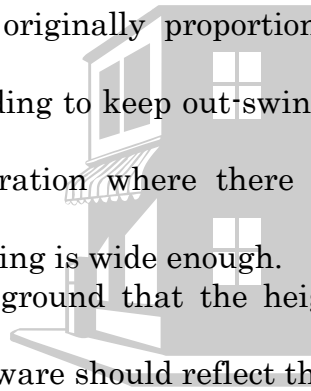
## DISCOURAGED:

- Removing or radically changing storefronts – and their features – which are important in defining the overall historic character of the building so that, as a result, the character is diminished.
- Changing the storefront so that it appears residential rather than commercial in nature.
- Introducing coach lanterns, mansard designs, wood shakes, nonoperable shutters, and small-paned windows if they cannot be documented historically.
- Changing the location of a storefront's main entrance.
- Failing to provide adequate protection of materials on a regular basis so that deterioration of storefront features results.
- Stripping storefronts of historic material such as wood, cast iron and brick.

- Replacing an entire storefront when repair of materials and limited replacement of its parts are appropriate.
- Using substitute material for the replacement parts that does not convey the same visual appearance as the surviving parts of the storefront or that is physically or chemically incompatible.
- Removing a storefront that is irreparable and not replacing it; or replacing it with a new storefront that does not convey the same visual appearance.

**THE ENTRANCE:** A front door has heavy demands put on it, including security, protection from the weather, and making a good first impression to customers and passersby. To ensure the entrance design is consistent with the building front and its historic details, consider the following:

- Keep the height of the entry and door as originally proportioned in old photos.
- Recess the doorway from the edge of the building to keep out-swinging doors within the building front.
- Double doors were typical and worth restoration where there is enough width.
- Single doors should have sidelights if the opening is wide enough.
- Use glass in the door, but no closer to the ground than the height of the window sills.
- Door handles and pulls and other visible hardware should reflect the building character.



**ENTRANCE DOORS:** Use solid hardwood doors with interesting panels. There are still many in storage downtown (where????) and custom-made doors are available locally. Painted wood will hold up well. If extra heavy use and maintenance demand something more durable, then use an insulated steel door rather than the ubiquitous aluminum type. Many design options are available, and it will be strong enough to be eight or more feet tall as may be fitting for the storefront design.

The standard issue aluminum and glass entrances seen everywhere are usually in discord with the old fronts in terms of materials, color, size and design. If an aluminum entrance door and frame are unavoidable then be sure they fit with the color scheme by using an anodized color finish or special aluminum paint in a dark color.

**HANDICAPPED ACCESS:** The public levels of downtown buildings are generally required to be made “accessible” when remodeled. The main features of an accessible door include a sloped walk rather than steps; a space to the side of the door 12-18 inches wide for a person in a wheelchair to operate the door; and a door and hardware combination that is easily opened.

**WINDOW DISPLAYS:** Storefront displays are generally of two kinds. First where the store itself is on display and the pedestrian can easily see into the shop. Daylight penetrates into the shop and shop lighting and activity is evident from the sidewalk. The charm of the store is particularly evident in the evenings. Or second, where the display area is enclosed, and cuts off the store area from the pedestrian. In this case the windows are like showcases, requiring especially interesting and changing displays.

Most stores in downtown Northfield have retained the early storefront scheme of fairly transparent display areas, where items large or small may be on display, but they do not block the view of the interior. Without doubt, the view of the interior is very important. In addition, the day-lighting and visual contact with the outside seen from within the store is another old town design asset missing from enclosed shopping spaces.

**WINDOW AND DISPLAY LIGHTING:** Display lighting as well as storefront lighting should be incandescent spotlighting only. Fluorescent lights are not as appealing in color because they give the storefront and sidewalk area in front of the windows a harsh and cold light.

# HISTORIC PRODUCTS

The following is a list of companies that carry products specifically designed or appropriate for use in historic structures. The Community Development Department carries product information for many of these companies, which can be viewed at City Hall offices.

## PAINT

Benjamin Moore



## WINDOWS

Marvin  
Andersen  
Karadco



## DOORS





# FINANCIAL INCENTIVES



## DOWNTOWN REVOLVING LOAN FUND

The City of Northfield operates a downtown revolving loan fund which provides low-interest loans for public infrastructure and site improvements in downtown Northfield. The guidelines for this program can be found in the following pages. For more information on this program contact the Economic Development Manager at (507) 645-3069.

## HISTORIC TAX CREDITS

The National Park Service also provide Historic Preservation Tax Credits, which provides equity for property owners to rehabilitate their historic buildings. Typically, renovations funded through this program must be “substantial”, defined by the program as “the greater of \$5,000 or the adjusted basis of the building and its structural components. The adjusted basis is generally the purchase price, minus the cost of the land, plus improvements already made, minus depreciation already taken.” Participation in this program also requires extensive photo documentation of the building prior to commencement of renovation. This program is administered by the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Abbreviated program guidelines are found in the following pages. For more information, contact SHPO at (651) 296 5434.

# THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

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 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 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 not be impaired.