



DESIGN GUIDELINES
FOR
DOWNTOWN
EPHRATA

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INTRODUCTION

As with most towns, Ephrata's Main Street boasts some excellent original structures that have been altered to suit business needs, economic considerations, or personal taste, without strict attention to pure architectural conformance. Although some buildings can be attributed to a particular style, most are a combination, which gives each its own distinct personality.

The ***Downtown Ephrata, Inc. Design Challenge Grant Program*** for facade enhancements is intended as an incentive for property owners to renovate their buildings according to some basic principles of architectural integrity. These principles, applied consistently throughout the downtown area, will result in a significant community asset for decades to come.

DISTRICT THEME

The downtown district of Ephrata stretches from the multi-story Art Deco-influenced Brossman Business Complex at Main & Lake sts. westward to the more Colonial Revival structures on the corners of Main & Park Ave. The town square is defined by the intersections of Main & State sts. and is the heart of the downtown district. It is anchored on each corner by significant buildings of varying architectural styles.

The architectural theme recommended for downtown Ephrata is the promotion and development of a vibrant, yet traditional Main Street character. With its current eclectic mix of architectural styles, and its pedestrian-friendly scale & proportions, the buildings that comprise the downtown District need to continue to foster and promote this theme.

As new construction and/or rehabilitation/renovation of existing structures takes place, a cohesive design style is desired to encourage the continuation of late 19th century/early 20th century streetscape.

By following the lead of some of the more architecturally prominent buildings, as well as these Guidelines, the traditional Main Street "feel" can be preserved and spread throughout the entire downtown.

SIGN GUIDELINES

When signs are graphically inventive, respectful of their surroundings, and contain appropriate materials, they become intrinsic parts of the identity of a business and add to the ambience of the entire commercial district. When signs use inappropriate materials, are over-scaled and/or poorly illuminated, customers take note. Signs should be designed with the consumer in mind, with emphasis placed on the positioning of the sign, ideally perpendicular to the building, within ten feet (vertical) of a sidewalk. Characteristically, signs should be externally illuminated and made of a natural material such as wood. Signs can contain reflective paint, wrought iron brackets, and/or other decorative details and architectural elements as determined appropriate.

LIGHTING GUIDELINES

The recommended style of streetlights selected for Downtown Ephrata highlight both the pedestrian environment along the sidewalks, and strengthen the period feel of Colonial Revival. These fixtures accent all major commercial streets and all outdoor public areas and spaces. Therefore, light fixtures that are being considered to adorn private spaces, as similar function, should be consistent with the period feel and lighting fixtures already approved and in place. Thus, the overall streetscape is enhanced. Additionally, a choice of three fixtures will be available for review by the Main Street Design Committee, who will make the final selection.

OTHER UNIFYING ELEMENTS

In addition to the streetscape elements listed above, it is recommended that a range of benches, trash and recycling receptacles, bicycle racks, signs, piers, bollards, and banners be used which match in architectural design. Recommended sign types include wayfinding, identity, street, and traffic. Finally, unnecessary obstructions on the front facade should be avoided. Specific mention is warranted for satellite dishes, as they continue to rise in popularity but provide an unwelcome marriage with historical architecture.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

A great deal of the commercial building development in Downtown Ephrata is not in conformance with the architectural character of the District theme. Currently, the District suffers from a lack of continuity in its physical image. The adoption and implementation of appropriate Architectural Design Guidelines that reflect the District theme is essential for the successful enhancement of the overall townscape of Ephrata.

Appropriate building facade and signage improvements reflecting the District theme will create a memorable physical image and destination to both residents and non-residents. Key to the creation of this image is the improvement and rehabilitation of as many building facades as possible to at least a basic level, rather than “over-improving” only a handful of buildings.

Storefront design and rehabilitation decisions in Downtown Ephrata must be made for buildings individually and should include an assessment that takes into account the buildings’ architectural or historic significance, and how it relates to the District’s overall theme. For building owners, tenants, architects, contractors or other parties interested in the renovation or construction of new commercial buildings and building facades, the following general guidelines have been developed. Buildings or features that are historically or architecturally significant are referred to as “significant” or “contributing.” Buildings or features that are non-historic are referred to as “other.”

Recommended Guidelines for Historic or Architecturally Significant Buildings:

- Follow Detailed Architectural Design Guidelines;
- Facade enhancements should be consistent with the District’s theme and architectural character;
- Follow the Secretary of the Interior’s “Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings”;
- Historic or architecturally significant features should not be modified to conform with the District theme architectural character;
- Preserve original features; buildings with strong architectural character should be respected;
- Repair deteriorated features and replace missing features based on careful research and documentation;
- Restoration/rehabilitation is preferable to demolition and recreation of an historically-correct reproduction;
- Alterations/additions should not radically change, obscure or destroy character-defining spaces, materials, features or finishes; additions, if absolutely necessary, should be designed to be consistent with the original historic building.

OTHER BUILDINGS

Description: Non-historic buildings that do not merit historic preservation but could be enhanced to be more architecturally compatible if significant rehabilitation or reconstruction is undertaken.

Recommended Guidelines for Other Buildings:

- Follow Detailed Architectural Design Guidelines
- Facade enhancements should be consistent with the District theme architectural character
- For economy and whenever possible, reuse non-intrusive existing features such as wall materials, windows and door openings, roofs and special features
- Remove non-conforming facade components such as storefront windows, doors, wall materials, roofs and signage
- Facade changes should be consistent with all visible portions of the building

NEW CONSTRUCTION

Description: The building of a new structure on a currently vacant site.

Recommended Guidelines for New Construction

- Follow Detailed Architectural Design Guidelines (see Technical Appendix)
- Building massing and design should be consistent with the District theme architectural character, referring to the more distinctive styles in the District, especially the architectural style of the early 20th Century period

VISUAL COMPATIBILITY PRINCIPLES AND DETAILED ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

Visual Compatibility Principles

When evaluating new construction, alterations, additions, or retrofits of existing buildings, there is a series of visual compatibility factors drawn from the National Trust for Historic Preservation that should be considered. Each building should be evaluated on its visual compatibility within that building as well as visual compatibility between the building and its adjoining buildings:

1. Building height
2. Proportion of the building's front facade
3. Proportion of window and door openings
4. Rhythm of spaces between buildings
5. Rhythm of solids to voids on facades fronting on public spaces
6. Rhythm of entrance and porch projections
7. Roof shape

8. Relationship of materials, texture and color
9. Scale of building
10. Street wall continuity with buildings, landscape and fences
11. Directional expression of front elevation—vertical, horizontal, non-directional
12. Exterior features—lighting, fences, signs, sidewalks, driveways

These broad principles are seen as complementary to the following Detailed Architectural Guidelines:

Detailed Architectural Guidelines

The following guidelines have been developed to assist individual business owners in making a preliminary assessment of their buildings and in considering a range of improvements. The determination of which guidelines may be appropriate and considered for a specific storefront must ultimately be based on appropriate architectural planning.

HISTORIC OR ARCHITECTURALLY SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS

Description: Significant or contributing buildings worthy of preservation restoration and rehabilitation

- (Original building of) Ephrata National Bank – 31 E Main
- Mentzer Building – 1-3 W Main
- Royer Building – 2-10 E Main
- Martins Studio building – 54-56 E Main
- Sheldon's Gallery building – 20 W Main
- Sheldon's Christmas Shop/Barber shop (aka Andrew Baker Mansion) – 16-18 W Main
- Nationwide Insurance building (aka Curt Good building) – 110 E Main
- Vacant Railroad Station – 16 E Main
- Sprecher building – 24 E Main
- Double Agency building – 32-34 E Main
- Branford Antiques building – 45-48 E Main
- Jimmy's Place building – 50-52 E Main
- Appel and Yost building – 123 E Main
- Temp Star building – 109 E Main
- Suhrbier Chiropractic building – 51 E Main
- Old Penny's building – 21-27 E Main
- Wissler Hotel building (aka Edward Jones building) – 2-12 W Main
- The Groves Assisted Living building – 103 W Main
- Kleinfelter buildings – 17-27 W Main

WALLS

Use and/or consider:

- Materials consistent with the District theme architectural character and compatible with historic or architecturally significant buildings
- Materials that complement existing and surrounding buildings
- Existing materials of fine detail and architectural character should be retained and preserved
- Awnings for providing a visual focus to windows/entrance, weather protection, concealment of security gratings, and coordinated signage
- Preservation/rehabilitation and use of traditional materials such as brick, stone, stucco, wood shakes/shingles, wood window frames, doors and horizontal wood siding

Avoid:

- Blank facades on any stories facing streets or public ways
- Materials that appear temporary or artificial such as aluminum and vinyl siding
- Materials that are of limited durability and difficult to maintain, such as exterior finish systems incorporating foam insulation in areas of moderate to heavy use
- Ultra modern/contemporary design elements

ROOFS

Use and/or consider:

- Roof forms and materials consistent with the District theme architectural character and compatible with historic or architecturally significant buildings
- Traditional materials such as tile, slate and wood shingle/shakes that complement existing and surrounding buildings or materials that are close in visual appearance
- Recreating original roof forms that have been modified or removed
- Gutters and downspouts of traditional shapes and materials
- Restoring original cornices and roof features such as dormers

Avoid:

- False mansards and other roof shapes out of character with the District
- Materials that appear temporary or artificial such as thin low grade asphalt shingles
- White aluminum gutters and downspouts; "K" gutters
- Unsightly roof objects, mechanical and electrical equipment, vents, hatches, etc. exposed to streets and public ways
- Covering existing original features such as cornices, dormers and wood trim with aluminum, vinyl or other contemporary materials
- Materials that are susceptible to frequent maintenance

WINDOWS/DOORS

Use and/or consider:

- Windows/doors consistent with the District theme architectural character and compatible with historic or architecturally significant buildings
- Divided light multi-paned windows and doors, where applicable
- Clear glass. Keep glass clean
- Window/door designs that are simple, well-proportioned, fill all of the building's original window/door openings and are appropriate to the overall architectural character of the building
- Attractive, well-lit merchandise displays with displays to the front; use the full extent of the glass for displays
- Fully accessible entrances that are inviting to all shoppers and meet all applicable handicap accessibility standards
- Interior and well concealed security gratings when gratings are necessary
- Displaying merchandise in vacant upper-story windows
- Window planter boxes

Avoid:

- Contemporary materials that appear artificial such as vinyl and aluminum
- Tinted or opaque glass
- "Strip" windows (continuous horizontal)
- Exposed exterior security gratings and coil boxes
- Blank facades on any story facing the street or public way

SCALE AND PROPORTION

Use and/or consider:

- Facade dimensions and proportions that are consistent with the District theme architectural character and compatible with historic or architecturally significant buildings
- Facades divided into smaller scale widths not exceeding the typical District commercial facade width
- Facades incorporating the rhythm of window, door and door openings, and structural bay of existing historic or architecturally significant buildings

Avoid:

- Building fronts wider than typical width in District
- Building setbacks from street greater than typical setback in District
- Theatrical effects or giant features

COLOR

Use and/or consider:

- Colors that are consistent with the District theme architectural character and compatible with historic or architecturally significant buildings
- Colors that are considered carefully so as to produce a unified but appropriately varied effect throughout the District

Avoid:

- Inconsistent or clashing colors on different or same facades

LIGHTING

Use and/or consider:

- Lighting design and fixtures that are consistent with the District theme architectural character and compatible with historic or architecturally significant buildings
- After-hours lighting on timers to encourage window shopping
- Appropriate accent lighting to highlight significant features

Avoid:

- Lighting of entire facades
- Unshielded security lighting
- Excessive interior lighting

SIGNS

Use and/or consider:

- Signs that are consistent with the District theme architectural character, compatible with historic or architecturally significant buildings and compliant with Borough ordinances;
- Limiting number of signs to three per business location;
- Moderately-sized and attractive sign design for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic;
- Signs integrated within a building's overall appearance; work within existing architectural features;
- Distinctive sign letters, logos and artwork specific to the store;
- Short and simple sign text;
- Pedestrian-scale letters on glass; limit window signs to about 15% of glass area;
- Signs projecting over public property or legal right-of-way may be appropriate depending on the unique physical characteristics of the particular property. Each sign proposal would have to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis;
- Sign light sources hidden from view; the lighting should be shielded so that no direct light shines onto sidewalks, streets or adjacent properties;
- Banners and flags specific to the store (if permitted by zoning);

- Small pedestrian-scale projecting signs with architecturally-appropriate hardware
- Signs constructed of natural materials with external lighting
- A-frame signs (if permitted by zoning);
- Freestanding signs; consider only when mounted sign cannot be used and consider grouping several store signs together; maintain low height

Avoid:

- Using more than three signs per business location
- Box signs
- Paper signs on windows
- Temporary or portable signs; freestanding and on building facades
- Long and complicated sign text
- Internally illuminated signs, except possibly at large shopping centers
- Wall signs above first floor levels, except for small projecting signs
- Rooftop signs
- Signs painted on facades
- Signs covering important building features
- Revolving signs
- Projected V-shaped signs without roof or ceiling
- Signs on utility poles
- Unused sign standards, mechanical equipment, etc.