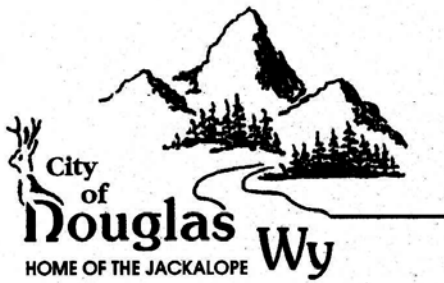


# City of Douglas Downtown Design Guidelines



**PRESERVING COMMUNITY HERITAGE AND  
MAINTAIN THE INTERGERTIY OF THE SMALL TOWN**

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## City of Douglas Downtown Design Guidelines

### INTRODUCTION

Design features and improvements that enhance the visual quality of the historic elements of the Downtown Area are encouraged because they help to preserve community heritage while also strengthening economic viability. New and existing buildings that present a good design image can also help provide a strong setting for commerce.

These Design Guidelines seek to encourage renovation and new development within the Downtown Area in a manner that will promote a degree of visual continuity, retain historic integrity, and encourage creative design solutions. The Guidelines do not dictate styles, but rather outline choices for achieving design compatibility within the downtown. The Guidelines also help to protect property values by encouraging improvements that maintain buildings as viable assets.

Good design will extend the life of a building, improve the market image of the business housed inside, and enhance the overall character of Downtown Douglas. Consciously or unconsciously, people react to the visual quality of their environment. Commerce is a primary function of downtown, and buildings, storefronts and storefront windows constantly provide clues about the character of the businesses found there.

Although these guidelines are specifically written for the buildings in the core area, many of the principles can be applied to commercial buildings in other parts of Douglas, especially where pedestrian activity is desired.

### GENERAL GUIDELINES

An individual storefront should have a simple, unified design that serves as a frame for the windows that display goods or reveal services offered inside. If the design and its colors are too “wild,” they will detract from merchandising, and if they are too plain, they will not draw enough attention. A visually pleasing balance is the goal. The guidelines that follow are intended to help property owners find that balance.

By applying these concepts throughout the downtown, a sense of visual continuity can be achieved or maintained. These Guidelines have general principles that allow room for individual solutions. At the same time, if each business owner applies the Guidelines to his or her project, the overall image of downtown will appear more strongly coordinated. It is important to note, however, that because there are many historic periods represented in the downtown, uniformity is not the goal. Much of the richness of the downtown comes from its variety of historic styles.

## GUIDELINES FOR EXISTING BUILDINGS

### **Scope of Project**

Decide the overall scope of the project. Will it be a major overhaul of the front or exterior? Or only minor repairs and improvements? Below are some basic steps to follow in determining a general approach.

1. First, check for critical maintenance or safety issues.
  - If the roof leaks, if floors are sagging, repairs to the structure or weather-protective systems may be a priority before facade or exterior renovation.
2. Next, evaluate the condition of the building front or exterior.
  - Does the original design survive intact? If so, preservation and maintenance should be the overall approach.
  - Does the original design survive, but with some alterations? If so, restoration and compatible alterations should be the overall approach.
  - Is the facade or exterior significantly altered, or totally lacking detail? If so, consider two options:
    - A. Reconstruct the original design if it has merits; or
    - B. Develop a totally new design that is compatible with the character of downtown.

### **Overall Contribution or Image**

Determine how much of the original front or exterior exists. Evaluate its contribution to the history of downtown or to the overall business image of the area. Then choose an approach from those listed in Step 2 above. It is worth the trouble to locate old photos, postcards, newspaper photos, descriptions, sketches, or original plan documents to determine the original appearance of the building.

### **Categories**

1. **Original Design Intact**

Buildings in this category have changed very little from the time they were constructed. Original ornament and detail, if part of the design, are still intact. Some portion of the façade may require maintenance and repair, but no new design work is necessary. In these cases, preservation of the original design is the prescribed action. (This is also the only option if the owner wishes to take advantage of any historic preservation tax credits and/or desires to obtain official historic building designation.)
2. **Original Design Slightly Altered**

If the basic character of the original design can still be seen, but some elements have been removed or changed, the building falls into this category. For example, an ornamental cornice may have existed at the top of the wall, but is now missing,

or upper story windows may now be blocked with plywood panels. If early photographs or original architectural drawings can be found, it may be easier to determine the changes that have been made. Restoration of the original design is one option in this case. Another choice is to restore some details while adding some new elements that are compatible with the original. For example, a missing cornice might be reconstructed. At the same time, a new shop entrance could be constructed that is not a copy of the original, but which uses the typical elements usually found on buildings downtown. From an historic perspective, it is preferable that such added elements be clearly different than the original rather than an imperfect copy.

### 3. Original Design Significantly Altered

These buildings have a plain front that is without any ornamentation or detail. This may be a result of a covering that hides original designs, or because the façade was constructed without ornamentation. New buildings often fit into this category. As a result, the façade is featureless, and usually fails to relate well to more historic buildings in the area. For such a situation, the Guidelines encourage reconstruction of the original design, or the development of an entirely new design which is compatible with the older buildings.

Fine design can occur in any period, and what is oldest may not necessarily be the best. For example, an elaborately designed alteration done in the 1920's or 1930's may be more worthy of preservation than the plain brick façade of the 1910's that it changed. Professional architectural help may be useful in making such judgments.

Once the building category and general approach to renovation have been determined, the owner can proceed to the Guidelines that follow.

## **General Building Characteristics for New and Existing Buildings**

1. The façade or exterior has ornament and detail that provides interest to pedestrians.
2. The first floor level has a large glass area that allows pedestrians to see goods and activities inside. Avoid the use of some modern semi-reflective or reflective glazing that make it difficult to see goods in the window due to reflections in the glass.
3. The front of the store is placed immediately at the sidewalk edge, helping enclose the pedestrian zone.
4. Signs are sized and positioned to be read by pedestrians.
5. The second story, where existing, is more solid than the first, with smaller windows. This is also the location for larger signs visible to motorists on the street half a block away. The size and design of the sign is important to consider so it does not overpower the building and is appropriate to the building's style.
6. Brick is often the dominant building material.

7. The entrance is recessed.

### **Guidelines for Typical “Downtown” Buildings (New and Existing)**

1. Respect the original design character of the building.
  - a. Analyze the building to determine which elements are essential to its character.
  - b. Do not try to make it older or newer than it really is.
  - c. Avoid theme designs (such as “wild west”) that do not reflect the original character of the building.
  - d. Respect the character established within the block.
2. Maintain the original size and shape of the storefront opening.
  - a. Large panes of glass that fit the original opening at the display level are encouraged. These allow pedestrians to see goods and activities inside.
  - b. If the alignment of the storefront wall at the sidewalk is not essential to its historic character, it may be recessed. In these cases, the line at the sidewalk should be retained by the use of other elements such as planters or changes in floor material.
  - c. If the original storefront is missing, greater variety of alignment may be considered. However, it should fit within the context of the block. If most other storefronts are strongly aligned and of historic value, then the new fronts should generally maintain this line.
3. Maintain recessed entries where they exist.
  - a. If the original recessed entry has been removed, consider re-establishing one. It need not be positioned in the original location if that does not work with the interior layout.
  - b. Where feasible, position the recess so it will reinforce the pattern of entrances established in the block.
  - c. Use doors with large areas of glass where feasible, as these will enhance the visibility of the business to customers. (Remember, even “e” glass is quite reflective and should be avoided along with all other reflective glazing.)
4. Maintain the kick plate that is found below the display window.
  - a. If the kick plate is missing, one option is to design a reconstruction of the original from old photographs.
  - b. If original information is not available, another option is to design a new, simplified kick plate that retains the original character.
  - c. Appropriate materials are painted wood, glazed tile, or painted metal.
  - d. Coordinate the color scheme of the kick plate with other façade elements.
5. Preserve the transom (clerestory) if it exists.
  - a. Use glass if possible. Preserve original prism glass or decorative designs where they exist. Original glass block, if missing, can usually be replaced fairly easily.
  - b. Use the space as a sign or decorative panel. Keep the inside background a dark color, similar to the way glass is perceived.

- c. Retain the shape and proportions of the original opening.
  - d. If the interior ceiling is now lower than this glass line, pull the dropped ceiling back from the window to maintain the window's historical dimensions.
6. Preserve the size and shape of upper story windows.
- a. Consider reopening the windows if they are presently blocked. Window shades or curtains, in colors that coordinate with other accent trim, are encouraged.
  - b. If lower ceilings are necessary, pull the ceiling back from the window to maintain the original height at the window.
  - c. If the budget cannot include reopening the windows, consider using shutters to define the original window dimensions.
  - d. Where upper story windows can be maintained, consider using curtains that repeat colors used on first floor awnings and trim. This is especially useful where upper floors are vacant. In this way, the second story can reinforce the color scheme of the store below, and the upper story will not show its vacancy as clearly.
7. Consider using fabric awnings to provide weather protection and create interest. This is particularly useful for buildings that are quite simple.
- a. The awning should fit the dimensions of the storefront opening, to emphasize these proportions. It should not obscure ornamental details. Operable or fixed awnings are appropriate.
  - b. Mount the top edge to align with the top of the transom, or to align with the framing that separates the transom from the main display window.
  - c. Align awnings with others on the block, where feasible. Exact alignment is not critical, and proper clearance to sidewalk must be maintained.
  - d. Coordinate the color of the awning with the color of the entire building. Fabric awnings are encouraged and striped awnings can add interest.
  - e. On some buildings, horizontal metal canopies may be appropriate where there is historic precedence for their being used on similar buildings.
  - f. Rough-sawn wood, plastic, shake or asphalt shingles, or rolled tar paper are not appropriate for awnings of canopies. Fake mansard roofs are also inappropriate.
8. Preserve original ornamentation and details of the façade and/or exterior.
- a. Where portions of details have been removed, refer to photographic evidence of the earlier condition, and look for details that may have been removed.
  - b. Where exact reconstruction of details is not feasible, consider developing a simplified interpretation of the original in which its major forms and lines are retained.
  - c. Ornamental caps or cornices at the top of the façade are encouraged.
  - d. Consider highlighting details with accent colors or lighting.
9. Avoid concealing original facade materials.
- a. If original material has been covered, uncover it if feasible.
  - b. If portions of the original must be replaced, use a material similar to the original in color and texture.

- c. Highly reflective materials are discouraged because they create glare and therefore discourage pedestrian activity.
  - d. Look for decorative brick patterns that are integral parts of the façade design, as these especially merit preservation.
10. Leave brick unpainted where feasible.
- a. This is especially appropriate for historic buildings.
  - b. If the brick is already painted, avoid paint removal schemes that damage the finish with abrasives methods. Sandblasting, for example, will damage the finish and accelerate erosion.
  - c. Consider repainting the brick rather than stripping the finish down to bare brick. Recognize that this will require repainting periodically.
11. Use roof forms similar to those established on the block.
- a. Most roofs present a flat parapet to the street. This is encouraged.
  - b. In any case, use roof forms that will strengthen the horizontal alignment of cornices and parapets along the street.
  - c. Fake mansard and shed roofs are inappropriate because they are out of character with the original façade designs.
  - d. Avoid concealing the original roof line.

## SPECIAL GUIDELINES

### **Plain Front Buildings**

Some buildings in the downtown area do not appear to have historic features or even contemporary ornamentation. Many were built as simple fronts. Others are actually cover-ups on older buildings. These Special Guidelines apply to such buildings in addition to the General Guidelines in this document.

12. Whenever feasible, uncover original facade materials.
- a. These materials are often more durable and more interesting than later coverings.
  - b. These materials may also provide an overall design idea for other building elements.
  - c. If the building is a more recent addition to the street, it is important to retain its simple original features, such as storefront glass, recessed entry, etc.
13. If uncovering is not feasible, develop a new design that will reinforce generic characteristics of other buildings on the block.
- a. Develop a new contemporary façade, using traditional storefront elements described above, or:
  - b. Develop a simple design with a unified paint scheme, and an awning and sign as accents.
  - c. An inexpensive option is to develop a decorative paint scheme for the plain front.

### **Rear Entrances**

14. Develop the rear entrance for shared public and service access where feasible.
  - a. Use an overall scheme of materials and colors that coordinate with the main facade.
15. Avoid concealing original materials when enhancing rear entrances.
16. Screen service equipment and trash containers.
  - a. Look for opportunities to cluster trash containers with other users on the block.

## **Illumination**

17. Use lighting to highlight building features.
  - a. Consider spotlights on ornamental brackets or decorative moldings.
18. Use lighting to unify the building composition at night
  - a. The display window lighting should remain the dominant element. Do not overpower this with extensive lighting on other facade elements.
  - b. Lighting shall be fully shielded so that no light reflection creates a nuisance to any adjacent property or right-of-way and that up-light, spill-light and glare are minimized.
  - c. Exterior lighting which is used to light a façade shall be reduced, or turned off during non-operating hours of the principal use. Security lighting is excluded.
19. Balance the color and intensity of lighting among building features.
  - a. Sign lighting should be balanced in color and intensity with light in display windows.
  - b. Warm-color light is preferred.
  - c. Fixtures should be concealed, or very simple, and appropriate to the period of the building.

## **Signs**

Signage shall be designed to blend with the character of the neighborhood, and shall not detract from the general streetscape.

20. These types of signs may be considered:
  - a. Flush-mounted wall sign.
  - b. Projecting.
  - c. Window.
  - d. Awning.
  - e. Marquee
  - f. Suspended
21. Signs with historic elements or signs that are historically accurate will be given preference.
22. Position flush-mounted signs so they will fit within architectural features.
23. Where several businesses share a building, coordinate signs.



24. Mount signs so they will not obscure any architectural details. Locate flush signs so they do not extend beyond the outer edges of the building front.
25. Sign materials shall be compatible with the facade materials. Painted wood and metal will be given preference over other materials
26. Illuminate signs in such a way as to enhance the overall composition of the facade. Internally lit signs are strongly discouraged.
27. Indirect light sources are preferred.

## **Color**

27. Use historic color palettes
  - a. Benjamin Moore: <https://www.benjaminmoore.com/en-us/color-overview/find-your-color/color-collections/hc/historical-colors>
  - b. Porter/Pittsburgh (PPG):  
<https://www.ppgvoiceofcolor.com/collections/essential-collections/historic-collection>
    1. Frank Lloyd Wright (PPG):  
<https://www.ppgvoiceofcolor.com/collections/frank-lloyd-wright/modern-2017-frank-lloyd-wright-palette>
  - c. Homestead House Paint Co.:  
<http://www.homesteadhouse.ca/products/milkpaint/colours.html>
28. Use color to coordinate facade elements in an overall promotion.
  - a. Use only one base color for the majority of the background wall surface.
  - b. Base colors should be muted tones.
29. Reserve bright colors for accents only.
  - a. Use bright colors only in small amounts.
  - b. Consider accent colors for signs, awnings, and entrance doors.

## **DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION CODE REQUIREMENTS**

New developments, remodels, restorations and renovations must meet the requirements of the development and construction codes as adopted by the city. The City of Douglas has adopted the International Existing Building Code. This code has been adopted for the purposes of encouraging the continued use or reuse of legally existing buildings and structures, encouraging the historic preservation and renovation of buildings and structures having historical value, establishing life-safety requirements for all existing buildings that undergo alteration or change of use, and offering alternative methods of achieving safety so that the inventory of existing buildings can be preserved. Consult with the Building Official or an architect for more detailed information.

## **LANDSCAPING REQUIREMENTS**

### **General Guidelines**

The city encourages the consistent use of streetscape design elements reflecting the indigenous natural land forms, plant materials and historic characteristics shaping Douglas. Landscaping should be designed to facilitate access and visibility in the Downtown Area, while providing a pleasing and inviting appearance.

### **Landscape Guidelines**

1. Streetscape  
Streetscape design plans will primarily use plants with very low watering requirements. These plants will be placed at focal points, interpretive displays, and other activity centers along the entryway corridor.
  
2. Landscape Palette  
Please refer to the University of Wyoming Extension Office for publications of Recommended Trees, Shrubs, and Low Maintenance Grasses for Wyoming and the Douglas Municipal Code, Table 16.5.5.-2 for authorized street tree species. Examples of recommended species include:

Cinquefoil	Red Maple
Russian Sage	Purple Leaf Plum
Sumac	Mountain Ash
Redtwig Dogwood	Yucca
Alpine Currant	Chokecherry
Rabbitbrush	Mugo Pine
Rocky Mountain Juniper	Ponderosa Pine
Mock Orange	Pinon Pine

Special attention needs to be paid to the usage of certain plant species that are quarantined from the State of Wyoming.
  
3. Turf Grass  
Varieties of Wheatgrass, Russian Wildrye, varieties of Fescue, Ryegrass, and Buffalograss are the recommended turf grasses at most locations.
  
4. Boulders  
Boulders are proposed in planting areas to add visual impact. The boulders will be complemented with dry stream beds which link planting beds and direct some storm water to desired locations.
  
5. Accent Lighting  
A continuation of the street lights as found on Second Street or replicating those shown in early Douglas downtown photographs are required throughout the Downtown Area.
  
6. Pole Fences  
Pole fences similar to that used in Riverside Park may be used throughout the entranceway area. Short section of pole fence can be used as a backdrop for planting areas.

### **LANDSCAPING CODE REQUIREMENTS**

Landscape/streetscape plans for the Downtown Area shall also be consistent with the requirements of Section 12.20 (Trees and Shrubs) and Section 16.5.5 (Unified Land Development Code; General Development Standards; Landscaping, Buffering and Screening) of the Douglas Municipal Code.