



Report # 2024-021

To: Mayor and Council
From: Richard Grant, Planner I
Date: February 8th, 2024
Committee of the Whole Date: February 12th, 2024
Title: Updated Downtown Core Design Guidelines

- For Direction
- For Information
- For Adoption
- Attachment 25 pages

Recommendation: THAT Council passes a by-law adopting the Updated Downtown Core Design Guidelines” as presented in Report # 2024-21.

Purpose: To update the Downtown Core Design Guidelines to assist landowners, developers and residents with urban design considerations for future planned development in the Downtown Core.

Background In 2015, Council adopted the Downtown Core Design Guidelines (DCDG), which offered several urban design recommendations for development in the downtown area. The Town’s Official Plan (adopted by the Council in 2014) supports the use of urban design guidelines in the downtown core to establish a coherent urban design framework to be used by property owners, developers, and their consultant teams to inform the proposed design for a planned development within the downtown. Moreover, the Guidelines, on their own, are not mandatory or regulatory; however, they support and provide direction to applicants for municipal incentive programs such as the Community Improvement Plan (façade improvements) and guide urban design decisions to support Planning Act applications.

In 2023, Planning Staff initiated an update to the Downtown Core Design Guidelines, which is presented for review and consideration by Council. The refreshed Guidelines attempt to provide more urban design considerations while keeping true to the spirit of the original 2015 version.

Given the recent changes to the provincial policies regarding planning approvals, the adoption of a new Community Improvement Plan (2022), and a new Sign By-law (2023) that includes provisions for the downtown core, a need was identified to review and refresh the Guidelines to ensure harmony and alignment with the current policy framework and provide information to property owners and land developers to assist them in making good design decisions with respect to the growth and development in Smiths Falls.

Analysis and Options: The refreshed DCDG establishes a series of goals and objectives, a summary of the Downtown’s built form to provide appropriate context to the Guidelines, as well as a suite of design recommendations founded on a series of design principles and considerations. The DCDG is intended to be used by landowners,



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developers and their consultant teams. Some of the key attributes of the updated guidelines include:

- Broader use of photos and graphics to illustrate and provide examples of what is considered good urban design;
- Increased detail on certain urban design aspects of a building or structure, such as building lighting and signage, to clarify the rationale and intent of the design recommendations; and,
- Greater focus and specifics related to environmental sustainability, including the nature of appropriate building materials, low-impact development techniques and energy reduction.

The DCDG recognizes the unique heritage context of the Downtown Core, as well as the overlapping architectural styles, building periods, and streetscapes that define our Downtown, and supports treatments that are complementary to the unique context of each building. New and infill development should co-exist with and work with the established character of their surroundings.

The design principles that lay the foundation upon which the DCDG is built are comprised of three sections: A Pedestrian-Friendly Environment, Sustainable Design Principles and Accessibility Design Considerations. With these principles, one can recognize and enhance the unique character of our Downtown through a clear urban design philosophy.

The updated Downtown Core Design Guidelines go hand in hand with the Official Plan, Zoning Bylaw, and other policy documents in providing the tools to enhance our Downtown Core and the Town overall. With a cohesive design framework, developers and their consultant team, and landowners can make better urban design decisions for future planned development, creating a more complete and inclusive community and enhancing a sense of place within our urban core.

Budget/Financial Implications: N/A

Link to Strategic Plan (2023-26): Strategic priority #4 - Redevelopment of the Waterfront and Downtown

Existing Policy: Official Plan, Downtown Core Design Guidelines (2015)

Consultations: Climate Protection Working Group, Municipal Heritage Committee, Downtown Business Association (DBA), Accessibility Advisory Committee

Attachments: Appendix A – Downtown Core Design Guidelines

Notes/Action (space for Council Member’s notes):

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Original signed by
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Appendix A – Downtown Core Design Guidelines



Downtown Core Design Guidelines

Town of Smiths Falls

2024

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Introduction

As our Downtown continues to experience a steady pace of growth and development, it is vital that every development project promotes and supports the best form of urban design and placemaking. The revitalized Downtown Core Design Guidelines aim to maintain the unique character of Smiths Falls through a straightforward urban design approach and develop recommendations that are appropriate for renovation, infill development, and the existing heritage context.

The design recommendations found in these Guidelines have been created to identify heritage preservation priorities and revitalization opportunities within the Downtown Core.

The Downtown Core Design Guidelines identify and reinforce the foundational design elements of the buildings represented in our rich and varied architecture. They aim to ensure that development in the Town of Smiths Falls promotes and supports high-quality design and that all new public and private projects reinforce healthy, vibrant, complete communities.

The Guidelines provide a flexible, intent-based approach that addresses the range of building typologies and scales that exist throughout the Downtown while respecting the Town's heritage.

Purpose and Application

The Downtown Core Design Guidelines reflect Smiths Falls' diverse, overlapping architectural eras and styles. The varied forms of architecture seen in the Downtown demonstrate the Town's rich industrial history and contemporary patterns of urban development.

The purpose of the Guidelines is to provide a cohesive vision and design framework that applies to all properties in the Town's Downtown Core, as identified on Schedule "A" of the Town's Official Plan.

The Guidelines should be used as a tool by landowners, developers and their consultant teams to inform the proposed design for a planned development. The use of the Guidelines will provide a cohesive framework and language to understand and communicate the urban design intent for the Downtown.

The Guidelines will help guide the urban design aspects of the review and evaluation process of new development permit applications evaluated by Planning Staff. These guidelines are intended to be flexible enough in intent, interpretation, and application to allow for and encourage creative solutions.

The Guidelines provide direction related to a property's built form rather than determining the appropriateness of a particular use, which is governed by the Town's Zoning By-law. The Downtown Core Design Guidelines are designed to be both inspirational and instructional in nature, created with the intent to clearly identify and describe the foundational elements that underly urban design principles and best practices. A Glossary is available to users for reference at the end of the Guidelines.

Goals

The overall goals of the Downtown Core Design Guidelines are to:

1. Encourage and guide high-quality redevelopment of existing buildings and newly constructed buildings while adhering to strong urban design principles, and respecting a building's inherent architectural features and heritage elements;
2. Promote a cohesive vision and design framework for neighbourhoods within the Downtown Core;
3. Encourage the use of sustainable design principles and techniques in the creation of urban development projects;
4. Aim to achieve consistent, high-quality signage and façade treatments; and,
5. Conserve and restore upper-story facades, including significant architectural details.

Objectives

The overall objectives of the Downtown Core Design Guidelines are to:

1. Promote high-quality development that enhances and reinforces the recognized character of the Downtown Core;
2. Promote development that is compatible with and complements its surrounding neighbourhood;
3. Incorporate sustainable design principles and techniques into the redevelopment of existing buildings and new constructed buildings;

4. Accommodate various commercial and residential uses within the Downtown Core harmoniously and consistently; and,
5. Foster compact, pedestrian-oriented development cognizant of street-level amenities.

Land Use Context

Downtown Core

The Downtown Core is the Town's commercial, institutional and community heart. The streetscape consists predominantly of commercial development, with upper storeys comprising of a range of residential and non-residential uses. This mixed use characteristic that has evolved over many decades. Beckwith Street forms the highest traffic "spine" with core-oriented development radiating to local side streets on either side, going east and west. The Town's Zoning By-law divides the Downtown Core into three zones, reflecting each subarea's specific context, as shown in [Figure 1](#).

The Downtown Core (DC) Zone comprises about 40 acres and is anchored by Beckwith Street North, the thoroughfare road running throughout the Town functioning as both the Town's traditional high street and as a connecting linkage between Highway 15 to the north and south of the Downtown.

Beckwith Street North's right-of-way is 30 m (99 ft) wide, with widened sidewalks, bike lanes, accessible parking stalls, and parallel parking stalls intended to promote vehicular, active transportation, and pedestrian interaction. The area extends to include commercial-predominant neighbourhoods on side streets, as well as community institutional uses such as the Library, Town Hall and several churches.

Zoning in the DC zone permits various commercial and complimentary institutional uses such as retail stores, museums and schools. The Downtown Fringe (DF) Zone comprises about 16 acres and applies to predominantly traditional residential communities in the shoulder area of downtown, functioning as a transition zone to the surrounding residential areas in Smiths Falls.

Zoning in the DF zone allows existing residential uses to continue and expand, while supporting a range of compatible commercial uses such as retail, offices and full-service restaurants. This zoning is intended to facilitate the transition to the surrounding residential neighbourhoods

The Downtown Waterfront (DW) Zone comprises about 18 acres and extends from Chambers Street to the Rideau Canal, a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site. The zone allows a range of commercial and passive recreational uses that fit its water-oriented landscape, while allowing above-ground residential uses. The zoning supports the gradual evolution of the area to become a destination that integrates with the Rideau Canal, in a way that is compatible with the cultural heritage landscape

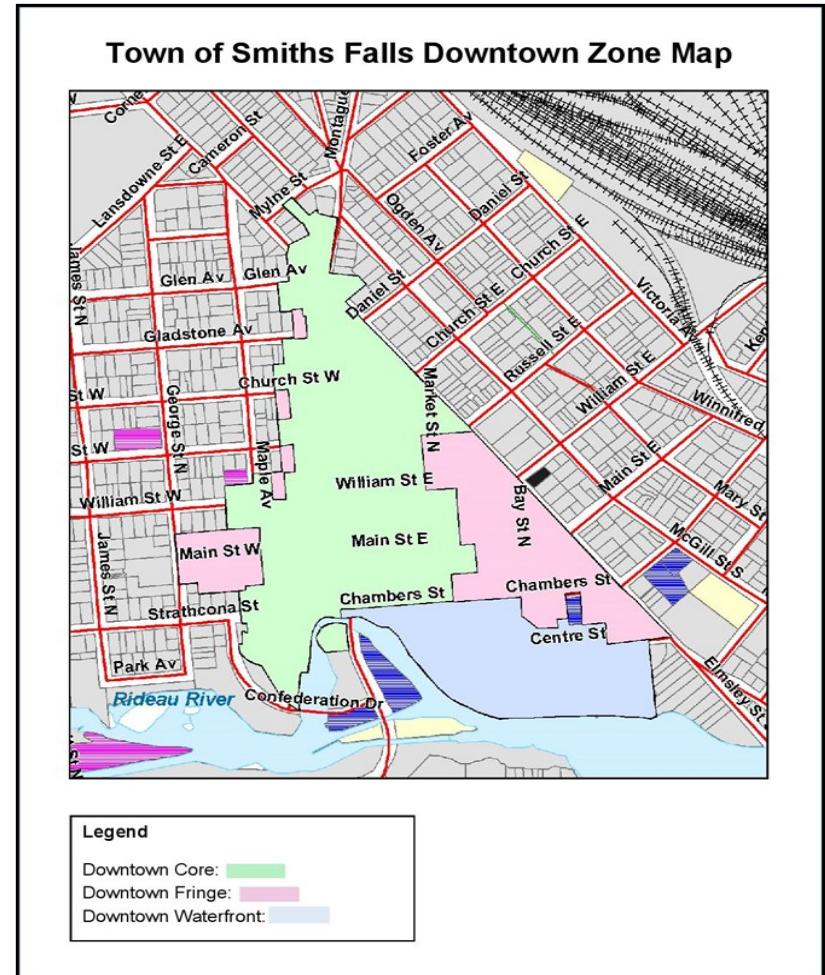


Figure 1: Downtown Zone Map

Architectural and Heritage Context

The Town's Downtown Core, as identified in the Official Plan, has a varied and overlapping blend of architectural styles from several eras. The depth and variety of our architectural styles reflect our rich industrial history, shaped mainly by our development and growth over the past 150 years. The dynamic growth of the Town is reflected in the diversity of architectural styles ranging from modest turn-of-the-century Victorian homes to Art Moderne to Renaissance Revival.

The Downtown Core exists as an excellent example of a dynamic cultural landscape with an eclectic mix of modest vernacular and designed structures and a strong connection to the economic development of the Town. While periods of economic changes and development over the past century have seen much of our older building stock seeing extensive renovations, many buildings still exhibit the strong characteristics of the popular architectural movements associated with periods of economic growth in the Town.

While many different styles of architecture can be found in Smiths Falls, such as Beaux-Arts, the three styles most prominent in the Downtown Core are Italianate, Renaissance Revival and Mid-Century Modern

Italianate (circa. 1850-1900)

Popular as an alternative to classical design styles of the time, the Italianate Style appears frequently on Canadian main streets as an attractive and popular design choice. Facades of this style were often divided into symmetrical bays with ceiling pediments, brackets, agraffes, pilasters and mouldings

Cast iron was a common building material used to construct accent details such as cornices, capitals, triglyphs, and metopes around traditional double-hung 6 x 6 or 8 x 8 sashes.

The Washburn Block (c. 1875) is an example of this style. A portion of the Block is located on the southwest corner of Main Street West and Beckwith Street North; the Washburn Exchange Block building, previously known as Garrett's Block or the Farmer's Exchange, has always been a significant business block. It provided a place for farmers to sell their goods before a public market was opened in 1862. It incorporates features such as the dichromatic double-tiered brick corbelling along the roof line, quoins and repetitive cast-iron window heads, and consoles on the second and third floors.



Figure 2: A portion of the Washburn Block on the corner of Main Street West and Beckwith Street North.

Renaissance Revival (circa. 1870-1900)

Key characteristics of this style are its use of rustication and design harmony. Known for its strong geometric balance, simple brickwork was used to create accenting details such as friezes, corbels, and dentils.



Figure 3: Located at 4 Russell Street East, this building is a great example of Renaissance Revival with its use of corbelling on the second floor.

Mid-Century Modern (circa. 1950-1970)

Primarily constructed out of engineered masonry or concrete block, the buildings of this era embrace a modern design featuring high ceilings in single-story structures and a stark absence of accenting details. The mid-century modern design used sleek, simplified geometry and non-symmetrical and angular planes.



Figure 4: Located at 69-71 Beckwith Street North, this building is an excellent example of mid-century modern architecture for commercial buildings with flat ceiling, absence of accenting details on the exterior façade and flat roof.

Policy Context

Town Official Plan (2016, as amended)

The Official Plan is a policy-led document that guides and supports compatible development within the Town while also protecting resources of provincial interest, providing the physical and social infrastructure to safeguard public health and safety, and encourages the protection and enhancement of the quality of the natural and built environment.

The Official Plan supports an integrated long-term planning approach that recognizes linkages among land use and municipal objectives expressed in Strategic Plans and Master Plans.

The Official Plan provides a vision for the future growth within the Town and a policy framework for regulating the development and use of land until 2034. The Downtown Urban Design policies (CD-5.1 to CD-5.6) express a desire to promote and achieve the Downtown's full potential as a diverse, cultural, recreational, civic, living, and employment centre through distinctive and quality urban design.

Policy CD 5.4 specifically speaks to guiding new development while ensuring that a high architectural and site design standard is achieved in the Downtown Core by maintaining Downtown Core Design Guidelines and policies.

Section 7.2.2 – Community Improvement Plan speaks to the Town's intent to utilize Community Improvement Plans to promote and focus public and private sector investments that improve the living and working conditions in the Town and improve the conditions of our building stock.

Downtown Revitalization and Waterfront Integration Master Plan (2013)

The Downtown Revitalization and Waterfront Integration Master Plan (DRWIMP) recommends "*tools that are intended to guide the redevelopment of the Downtown Core and re-connection of the waterfront and to ultimately make Smiths Falls a sensational place to live, work, shop, socialize and recreate*".

The plan aims to support sustainability principles, pedestrian-friendly environments, heritage preservation, and the creation of vibrant outdoor public spaces.

The DRWIMP includes a conceptual plan that recognizes the unique components of a unified downtown area while identifying four distinct components :

1. **Precinct 1 (Top of the Town Civic Precinct):** A gateway motif, complete with improved intersections and pedestrian crossings, parkette development, and civic and streetscape improvements.
2. **Precinct 2 (Beckwith Centered Downtown Core Revitalization Area):** A placemaking motif focusing mainly on Beckwith Street, complete with improved walkability, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, streetscaping and vehicular traffic systems (including on-street parking configuration options for Beckwith Street as well as off-street parking provisions elsewhere) to enhance the area as a critical commercial, service, and social centre.
3. **Precinct 3 (Lower Town Waterfront Redevelopment Area):** A motif that supports the transition from the Rideau Canal and Waterfront Greenway (Precinct 4) to the south through improved waterfront interpretive nodes and lookouts and provides a southerly entry point into the Downtown through improved pedestrian trail connections.

4. **Precinct 4 (Rideau Canal and Waterfront Greenway):** A placemaking motif focusing on developing continuous pedestrian connections along the water's edge, linking key features with the street network and the Downtown Core.

Section 4 of the DRWIMP includes broad direction to guide the development of design guidelines for the Downtown Core, with the intent to reinforce and enhance the character and identity of the Town.

The design recommendations are broken into four major themes that reflect the Town's natural and cultural history: Industrial Heritage, River/ Canal Centered, Rideau Canal Heritage, and Transportation Heritage. The Downtown Core Design Guidelines aim to take cues from the Master Plan to support sound urban design principles and placemaking in community building.

Smiths Falls Community Improvement Plan (2022)

The Smiths Falls Community Improvement Plan (CIP) complements the plans, policy, and regulatory documents implemented for the Downtown Core by providing a range of financial incentives to stimulate investment and promote long-term economic viability.

The goals of this CIP program are to (1) improve the accessibility of buildings, (2) promote and encourage the development of attainable housing; (3) stimulate the Town's local economy, and (4) promote and encourage the redevelopment of vacant sites. The purpose of the CIP program is to help stimulate investment in the revitalization of Smiths Falls by offering financial incentives that cover the following four focus areas:

1. **Universal accessibility**, where internal and external improvements to a building are made with respect to a barrier-free design for everyone, regardless of age, physical ability, or stature;
2. **Attainable income-based housing**, where housing costs (excluding utilities) are less than 30% of a low- to moderate-income household's before-tax income;
3. **Brownfield development**, where a brownfield property is one that was previously developed, is currently vacant, and has indicated contamination through professional studies; and,
4. **Downtown and waterfront area revitalization** to help create a more inviting atmosphere for residents and visitors through:
 - 4.1. façade, signage, and landscaping improvements to commercial, multi-unit residential, or mixed-use properties; and,
 - 4.2 restorations, renovations, and improvements to the interiors of commercial, institutional, or mixed-use commercial at grade) buildings.

The Downtown Core Design Guidelines can be used to guide applicants to the CIP and support the evaluation of applications through financial incentive programs #13 '*Front, Side, and Rear Facade Improvement Rebate*', and #14 '*Building Restoration, Renovation, and Improvement Program*'.

Design Principles

The Downtown Core Design Guidelines have been developed to help implement the following key design and development principles:

1. Create a beautiful, thriving, accessible and pedestrian-friendly environment to work, live and do business in;
2. Promote Downtown's role as the civic and cultural heart of the Town. Maximize the use of the public realm as a place for civic life by creating a more attractive, vibrant, and culturally diverse environment;
3. Preserve and enhance the Downtown's significant human-scaled built and cultural heritage resources. Celebrate the Downtown's heritage and local history as an active contribution to our collective memory. Conserve and protect heritage buildings and encourage adaptive reuse to support the heritage building's viability;
4. To create a more inclusive Downtown, plan with accessibility in mind. An accessible downtown area is one that is inclusive to residents and visitors alike, and everyone has access to the same opportunities;
5. Incorporate different building elements within the project (building material, detail treatment, patterns of openings and fixtures, etc.), and integrate new development into the neighbouring fabric by considering height, openings, street relationship, etc; and,
6. Practice sustainable design by utilizing sustainable materials, incorporating innovative energy and material conservation strategies, and considering the environmental impacts of a design.



Figure 5: Downtown Smiths Falls

Pedestrian-Friendly Environment Design Considerations

Streetscape design should create a pedestrian-friendly environment by considering human scale, urban aesthetics, and accessibility for pedestrian activity to create the best pedestrian experience possible for users. A pedestrian-friendly environment at a human scale ensures pedestrians feel connected, inspired, and comfortable in the Downtown Core.

Design Considerations

- * Respect the urban tradition of streets and blocks by recognizing that the street is an important public space shared by everyone with numerous reported public health and environmental benefits. Prioritize non-vehicular uses such as walking, cycling, and skateboarding;
- * Sidewalk amenities such as street plantings and landscaping along sidewalks not only enhance the aesthetic appeal of the Downtown Core but also promote economic activity, encourage tourism, create a sense of community pride, and contribute to intimate urban environments. Wood planters, hanging baskets, benches and waste receptacles are examples of street furniture that can create a more pedestrian-friendly environment;
- * Consider street plantings or landscaping that are native to Eastern Ontario, require low maintenance such as being drought or pollution-tolerant, and complement the surrounding area through a variety of sizes, shapes and species variety;
- * Ornamental features such as awnings and patios create a sense of seclusion from vehicular traffic and protect from adverse environmental elements; and,

- * The use of colour in urban design projects should focus on enhancing the proposed development while being compatible with its overall surroundings. Use neutral colour palettes such as white, beige, ivory, taupe, gray, and black, as well as natural colour tones such as blue, green, and brown. Colour selection is not restricted to these colours referenced above; however, the consistent use of these colours can help create a more cohesive Downtown.



Figure 6: To enhance the street presence of your storefront business, wherever consider incorporating pedestrian friendly features such as awnings, planter boxes and patio seating.

Sustainable Design Considerations

Sustainable design is a design philosophy that integrates an environmentally friendly approach and considers natural resources as part of the design process. In the long term, new or existing buildings will benefit by implementing energy-efficient and environmentally conscientious strategies.

Energy-efficient, eco-friendly techniques and materials should be explored and considered a standard practice during the design phase of a project. Sustainable design considerations that generate a small environmental impact or footprint is encouraged.

Design Considerations

- * Environmentally sustainable materials are encouraged to create better conditions for a more sustainably conscious environment and circular economy. Environmentally sustainable materials or alternatives such as wood, bamboo, and other plant-based materials are sustainable because they are grown naturally and are inherently renewable .
- * Aluminium, copper, and other metals can be recycled indefinitely. Paper and related products are based on natural fibres, can be recycled, and degrade rapidly once disposed of. Common sustainable building materials include cork , steel and recycled plastics ;
- * Where possible, incorporate materials that help achieve carbon neutrality and reduce overall energy consumption. Consider incorporating the use of renewable energy sources such as solar energy with solar panels on retrofitted roofs or water conservation systems like rainwater collection and recycling grey water;

- * Incorporate energy-efficient roof systems such as highly reflective materials (white shingles/steel or gravel to reflect heat); solar panels for water heating or electrical generation (when not visible from the public right-of-way other than the laneway system) and green roofs (to improve insulation and control stormwater);
- * Utilize proper insulation methods and techniques through the renovation of existing buildings and development of new buildings to help conserve energy consumption;
- * Explore opportunities to enhance natural lighting in existing and newly constructed buildings; and,
- * Incorporate low-impact development techniques to reduce surface water run-off, improve water quality and help foster climate resilience, such as permeable pavers, rain gardens and green roofs



Figure 7: Greenroofs such as the one pictured here is great way to incorporate low-impact development techniques to reduce water runoff, conserve energy and create more urban green spaces.

Accessibility Design Considerations

Within the Downtown Core, designing for accessibility is integral to creating a more inclusive and pedestrian-friendly environment for all people. It is vital that we improve the barrier-free design of the streets and the accessibility of buildings. However, it is well understood that with respect to heritage conservation and maintaining accessible, barrier-free buildings, these renovations and building retrofits pose certain design and accessibility challenges, as the layout of these buildings often does not accommodate this requirement.

The Ontario Building Code and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act have detailed information on internal building layout compliance.

Design Considerations

- * New and existing buildings should adhere to, and whenever possible, exceed the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontario with Disabilities Act (AODA) to ensure barrier-free access for people of all ages and abilities. Through the building permit process, AODA guidelines will be adhered to through compliance with the Ontario Building Code ;
- * Provide barrier-free main entrance points for businesses and residences on all levels/floors, incorporating things such as smooth, non-slip paths to the business entrance, colour contrast on the entryway doorframe, and a doorbell
- * Wherever possible, incorporate an automatic door opener and accessible door hardware such as AODA compliant door locks and handles, directional signage;
- * Where grade changes exist, permanent sloped ramps with hand railings should be incorporated in order to access the building from the street;

- * Entrances should be well-defined with the use of lighting, signs, doorways, or awnings for improved visibility, sufficient width and access;
- * Storefronts should have access at grade with the sidewalk. Should the exterior space permit, a ramp (with guardrails) parallel with the building might be considered with proper site plan / municipal approval; and ,
- * Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles should be used to ensure safety for all users organically. Examples for consideration include exterior lighting. For more information on CPTED principles please visit CPTED Canada.



Figure 8: The use of an accessible ramp creates a more inviting environment by providing a barrier-free entrance for all users.

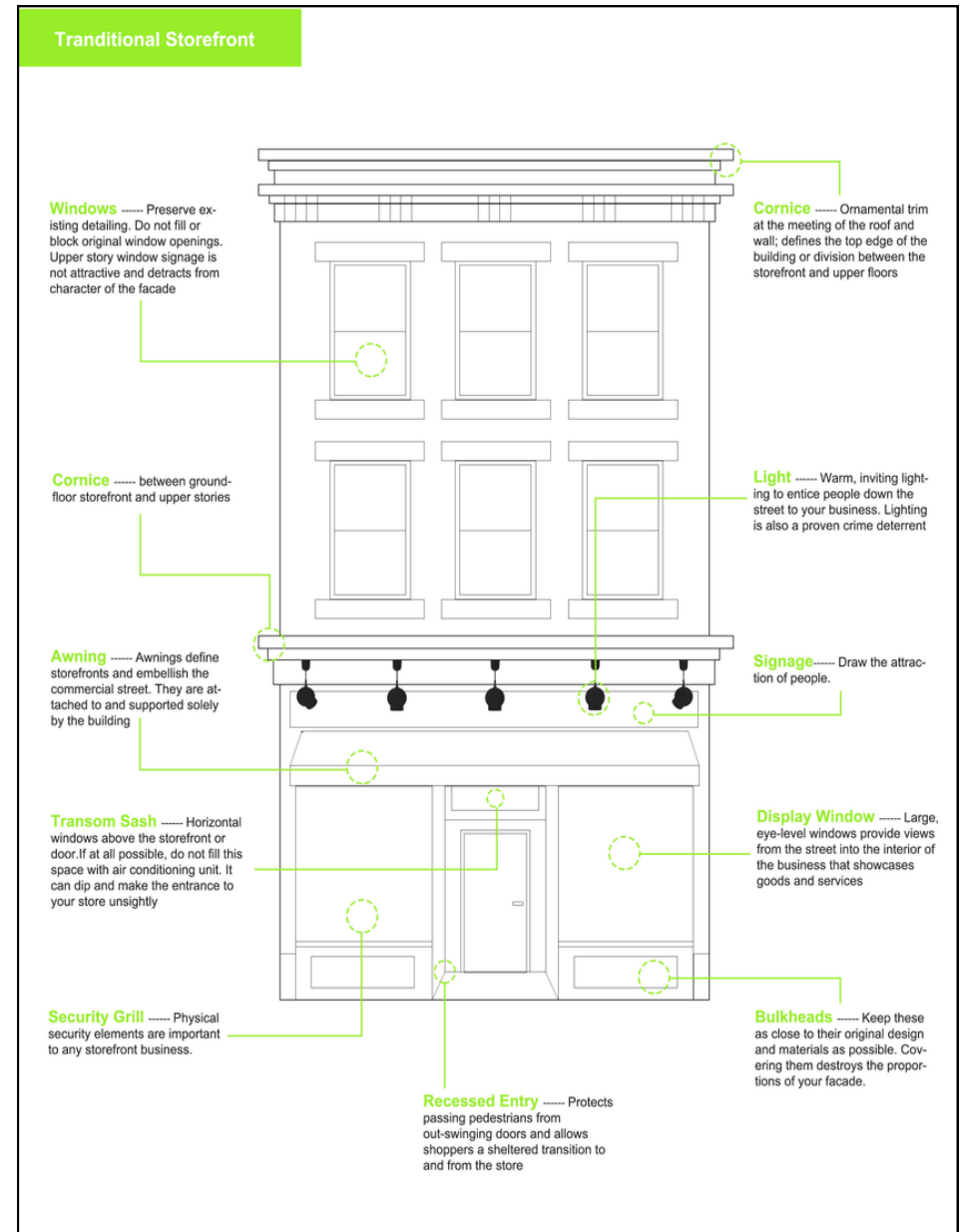
Building Elements

Restoration of Original Façades

Downtown Smiths Falls is exemplified by various buildings from different eras with rich historical and architectural detailing, resulting in a unique and charming character. Restoration of buildings that contribute to the history of the downtown should follow the principles articulated in the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places*. If the original façade has been covered with a different material, the Town's Heritage House Museum and the Smiths Falls Public Library contain archival information that may document the original façade material or colour.

Design Considerations

- * Whenever possible, maintain and restore the original façade components and materials. If the components are damaged, repair of the damaged components is preferred over replacement;
- * Attempt to replicate the original details and materials when replacing damaged façade components which are not repairable ;
- * The substitution of materials of similar colour, texture, dimensions, proportion, and design to the original is preferred where replication is not possible ;
- * If replication or repair of existing building features is not possible, new materials and architectural styles that complement the style and material of the original façade should be used where damage is not repairable and must be replaced for more than 50% of the surface area of the building façade and
- * If original architectural elements are concealed or otherwise covered, the removal of the concealing materials and the restoration of the original elements is encouraged.



Source: Reimagining the West End, Edelman et al., 2016

Figure 9: Traditional Storefront

Materials

Most of the Downtown's historic buildings have façades constructed originally using vernacular materials of mainly sandstone, brown limestone, or red brick sourced from Eastern Ontario. Any repairs or renovations to these structures should include using like materials. If sourcing these materials proves difficult, adopting modern alternatives should be sympathetic to the heritage of the building and complement the character of the Downtown core .

Design Considerations

- * Durable, high-quality materials such as brick, stone, board, batten, and cement board are encouraged; and,
- * The use of sheet metals, vinyl siding and stucco is discouraged.

Parapet Wall

A parapet wall is a low wall or railing that extends above the roofline of a building or other structure, usually located at the edge of a flat roof or balcony. Its primary function is to provide a barrier to prevent people from falling off a roof or balcony. Parapets can also enhance the visual interest of a building and become a distinctive architectural feature along the roofline.

Design Considerations

- * The use of a parapet wall can be used to increase the visual impact of a low-profile building that is surrounded by taller buildings and ;
- * To reduce the visual impact of unsightly features such as utility boxes on a building, a parapet building can be used to screen these building elements.



Figure 10: Rooftop screens used to screen rooftop equipment is a great way to incorporate a parapet wall on top of buildings in the Downtown Core as it reduces the visual impact of the rooftop equipment.

Cornices

Cornices are defined as any horizontal decorative moulding that crowns a building feature or element, providing a distinctive upper edge to the building's façade, distinguishing the horizontal demarcation of the top of the third or fourth-floor façade or the lower cornice on the first floor. Cornices are most often subject to deterioration due to weather exposure and can cause hazards to the street below.

Design Considerations

- * Cornices are prominent, visible, and often decorative features of historic buildings that help to define their "character. Preserve, repair, or replace in kind to their original configuration. Maintain and repair the cornices with similar materials;
- * Architectural detailing similar to cornices used to define or separate a lower-level commercial use should not exceed the lower edge of an upper-storey residential window;
- * Historically sympathetic cornice design for new development is encouraged; and,
- * It is recommended that building cornices be inspected regularly to ensure that the materials are in good condition and do not have any water penetration.



Figure 11: An example of distinct and eye-catching roofline with preservation of the original cornices defining the upper edge of the building's façade.



Figure 12: An example of cornices defining the edges of this multi-unit residential buildings creating a distinctive architectural detailing that complements the buildings overall design.

Upper-Storey Section

In the Downtown, buildings will typically divide horizontally into storeys that accommodate different uses such as retail uses and service commercial on the ground floor, with the upper-storeys containing a mix of commercial and residential uses. Each storey may be horizontally demarcated on the building façade through the use of projecting mouldings, intermediate cornices, changes in material, changes in colour and masonry coursing

Design Considerations

- * Repairs and alterations shall restore original features. Restoration should be based on research of documents, photographs, and inspection of site conditions;
- * Remove stucco or metal paneling such as vinyl cladding as poor-quality materials are discouraged; and,
- * Additional architectural elements such as lighting, shutters, and/or awnings, where appropriate, can be added as long as they align with the building's architectural style elements and character.



Figure 13: An example of a 2-storey building with a storefront on the bottom floor and an upper story residence. The 2nd storey portion maintains the original façade and window treatments.

Upper-Storey Floor Window

Located above the ground floor of traditional storefronts in the Downtown, upper-storey windows are often overlooked, yet reveal the most interesting architectural details about a building thereby enhancing its character. Maintaining these features is an important aspect of preserving the character of these buildings.

Design Considerations

- * Where possible, original window frames and sashes found in buildings of historical and cultural value should be repaired rather than replaced. Where replacement is required, a like material should be considered first;
- * Every effort should be made to match the replacement windows to the historical window openings. Do not fill or remove a window opening or details such as window arches;
- * For window frames that do not precisely match the existing frame shape should fill the lintels as best as possible, and the use of window fillers should be decorative in nature;
- * New or infill development should respect the general proportions, scale, and size of upper-storey floor windows in adjacent heritage buildings;
- * The use of multi-paned window types on upper floors and windows with grills where historically accurate is encouraged;
- * Architectural treatments to buildings are encouraged. Treatments may include, but are not limited to, the use of prominent sills, mouldings, flower boxes, soldier courses, keystones, recessing and/or shutters; and,

- * Upper floor stories typically feature smaller windows arranged in a consistent, often symmetrical, pattern with vertical orientation. Consider maximizing the height-width ratio, and avoid large single glass plates on the upper floors.



Figure 14: An example of a traditional storefront with the original upper-story floor window along the roof of the building

Rooftops & Rooflines

Rooftops or rooflines, as the top covering of a building, are part of the building envelope that protects against the elements. However, they can also provide an opportunity for additional amenity space through urban design, which can provide longstanding visual interest, absorb runoff, and enhance the public character of a building.

Design Considerations

- * Roofs of new or infill developments should respect those of their neighbours by maintain a consistent height if possible , complementing the nearby buildings and maintaining the downtown's overall character; however, signage on roof buildings are not encouraged;
- * Rooftop equipment placed on top of new or existing buildings should be set back far enough from the front or exterior façade to preserve the visual interest of the streetscape. The same approach should be taken with respect to any wind or solar energy devices placed on the rooftop. Appropriate building materials such as wood, steel, stone, brick parapet designs, should screen the rooftop equipment; and,
- * The use of rooftops for landscaping, amenity space, or urban agriculture is encouraged. This may include green roofs, gardens, and greenhouses.



Figure 15: An example of a distinctive roofline created by corbelling along the four buildings. One important aspect to recognize is the consistent height of the buildings which contributes to a sense of compact form, strong street presence and design uniformity.

Display Windows

Display windows are often the most prominent facet of storefronts and the main architectural element establishing visual continuity along the street. These guidelines emphasize the display windows as an important streetscape element.

Design Considerations

- * If possible, original windows should be repaired or restored when considering any alterations or renovations. If it is necessary to replace a window, the replacement window should be of the same size and shape as the original window and/or the lintel configuration;
- * Avoid filling in window openings of generally historical buildings with solid materials. If the window is no longer in use, it should be secured and left available for future use;
- * Storefront windows should be designed to invite natural lighting into the commercial space, provide an area for display space, and encourage "window shopping" by pedestrians;
- * Maximize the height-width ratio of windows;
- * Colourless glass etching is encouraged for logos and names;
- * Do not frost/glaze over large areas of windows; and,
- * Window signs are to be used only on storefront windows and not upper-floor windows.



Figure 16: An example of a storefront display window that is both inviting, with well placed window decal to maximize the height-width ratio of the storefront window.

Awnings and Canopies

Awnings and canopies can enhance a façade and provide a decorative touch to a storefront while improving a pedestrian-oriented shopping area's overall appearance and character. Awnings also provide comfort for pedestrians by acting as protective coverings from the weather while advertising the presence of a building or store and creating an intimate space along streets.

Design Considerations

- * All awnings and canopies on a single storefront should have consistent form, material, or colour;
- * Awnings and canopies should be designed to match the main structural elements of the building's lower façade and incorporate design elements such as the colour or material to match the overall design of a building's storefront;
- * A consistent style of canopy or awning should be used for the entire building façade and installed at a consistent height and projection to harmonize their effect on the streetscape;
- * High-quality awning materials such as canvas, acrylic and polyester composite are recommended. The use of awning materials such as thin, flimsy fabrics that tear easily, cheap plastics that crack and discolour quickly, or metal frames that rust and corrode are discouraged; and,
- * In all instances, consider the durability of the fabric regarding weathering. Fading and mould-resistant fabrics are preferred.



Figure 17: An example of storefront awning with signage that is perpendicular to the main street and visible to pedestrians



Figure 18: An example of awning signage on building storefront

Signage

Within the Downtown Core, it is understood that businesses should be able to identify themselves through creative design and recognizable signage. It is also important that signs used by businesses in the Downtown Core are harmonious with the area's heritage in quality, scale, and style

Design Considerations

- * Commercial signage must be representative of the business activities and must comply with all respective municipal requirements and Building Code Standards;
- * Avoid large signs that dominate the façade as they interfere with the architectural and heritage character of the building. Storefront signage should be proportional to the storefront's width;
- * Secondary signs, such as portable signs (sandwich boards), can add life to the street but must not reduce pedestrian travel areas to less than 1.5 m in width;
- * Contemporary projecting signs are permitted in accordance with the Town's Sign By-law. Further encroachment may be subject to an encroachment agreement;
- * Projecting signs should be oriented towards pedestrians walking down the street or at the outer edges of the storefront, installed perpendicular to the facade near the business entrance, having a minimum height of 8.5 ft above grade
- * Signs with modern and contemporary designs should use high-contrasting text and backdrops. For example, white lettering on dark tone backgrounds (i.e., black, dark grey, and navy blue), black lettering on against a neutral colour palette (i.e., black, white, brown, navy blue, and beige)

- * When designing and developing signage, design with accessibility in mind by having easy-to-read lettering such as Serif, Helvetica, or Garamond font and using colours that promote high visual contrast such as white and black, and red and black;
- * The use of high quality materials, and lighting options for signage is encouraged; and,
- * Cabinet (Box) signs, readograph signs, mural signs, signs which incorporate flashing or moving illumination that varies in colour or intensity, signs which have moving parts or have visible mechanical movement (including pulsations), and signs attached to awning signs, canopy or projecting signs are not permitted in the Downtown Core in accordance with the Town's Sign Bylaw;



Figure 19: An example of non-illuminated storefront signage

Exterior Shutters

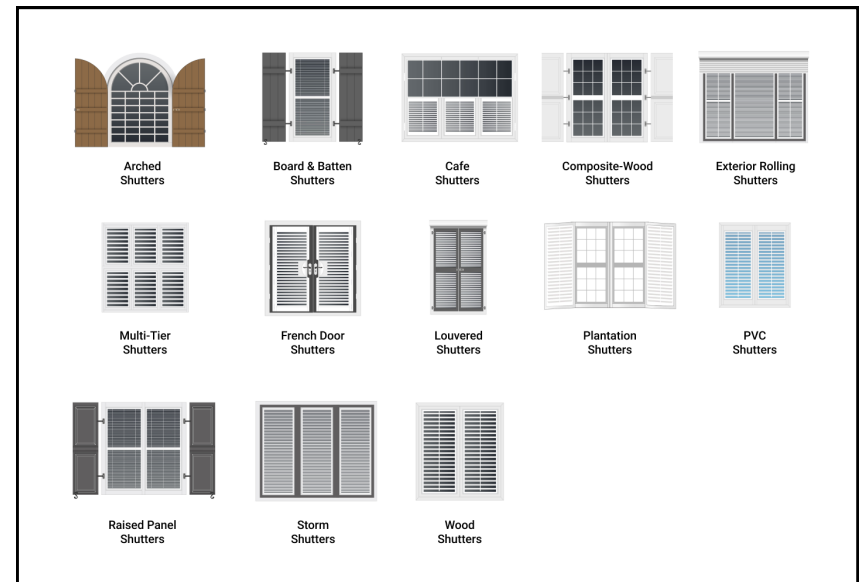
Exterior shutters can add historical accuracy and visual interest to a building's façade, even when not used to provide light control, privacy, security, and protection from the elements.

Design Considerations

- * The design of exterior shutters should fit the shape of the window. For example, arched windows will have arched shutters, rectangular windows will have rectangular shutters, etc.;
- * Adhering to the original design of the building, exterior shutters should only be considered where appropriate, in keeping with the architectural style and character of the building;
- * The height of each shutter should be proportionate to that of the window it frames;
- * To give the appearance that they can be closed, shutters should be placed on the inside edge of the window frame; and,
- * The material of choice for exterior shutters is wood or composite because it is a high-quality material that works well with a traditional exterior. If using natural wood, they should be sealed yearly for the best appearance and durability.



Figure 21: An example of exterior shutters on a 2-storey brick building.



Source: *European Rolling Shutters, 2024*

Figure 22: Pictured to the left is a diagram of common style of shutters

Lighting

Lighting is an essential feature for creating a welcoming, vibrant, and safe urban environment that supports the economic, social, and cultural activities downtown. The goal for lighting is to highlight specific details on a building or structure such as entryways or space on the building façade and provide an additional sense of security for pedestrians in the downtown area. Lighting should both complement a building or structure and be appropriate to the building's architectural style and design.

Design Considerations

- * Pedestrian-scale lighting, often located at the ground floor of buildings should be provided at regular intervals along building frontages and within shared outdoor amenity areas;
- * Lighting fixtures selected should be designed to prevent or minimize light scatter or pollution. Light fixtures should be dark sky compliant (see Glossary) with shadow guards to prevent or limit light scatter or pollution;
- * The use of LED or other energy-saving lighting fixtures is encouraged. LED lighting should have a Kelvin rating of between 3000 and 6000, which will produce a range of light from soft white light to bright white light instead of being too red or blue in colour;
- * Backlit lighting and signage, as well as neon, electronic messages, or fluorescent lighting in windows, must be avoided;
- * Lighting for signage should be done with externally mounted lighting. Above mount lighting (e.g., Gooseneck light, Wall lantern or Wall Sconce) is strongly encouraged; and,

- * Wherever possible consider illuminating the architectural features of a building such as pilasters, columns and cornices to create a more vibrant and attractive downtown;
- * Building lighting is not a replacement for street lighting and should complement the building, keeping with the character and style of the building.



Figure 23: An example of exterior gooseneck lighting on building storefront used to illuminate the façade of the building.



Figure 24: An example of lighting that highlights the architectural detailing of a commercial building.

New and Infill Development

New and infill developments in the downtown core are encouraged to reflect the unique character of Smiths Falls, which is composed of varied and overlapping architectural styles, both sympathetic to the earlier buildings from the mid-18th century and embracing those of a modern contemporary style.

Design Considerations

- * New or Infill projects that are adjacent to or nearby to properties designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act will need to be designed to be sympathetic to that context and may require additional approvals or technical review;
- * Additions or alterations to existing heritage buildings should respect and conserve the building's heritage value by complementing its character and style as well as the attributes of the surrounding area;
- * New or Infill development should be sympathetic to the existing architecture, respecting the scale, massing, footprint, proportions, and setback of adjacent buildings to maintain the rhythm and structure of the streetscape ;
- * Emphasis should be placed on the architectural detailing and ornamentation of street-facing facades of buildings. New or infill development should consider the amount, location, and elaborateness of architectural detailing and ornamentation of neighbouring buildings, taking care not to copy it exactly;
- * Building facades should incorporate architectural detailing that is sympathetic and compatible with the character of its surroundings for new or infill developments. A contemporary interpretation and understanding of historic detailing and ornamentation should be used to differentiate between a designated heritage building and a sympathetic new construction ;
- * Additions or alterations to buildings should be similar in height to adjacent buildings and should not dominate the existing street wall nor make subordinate any adjacent heritage buildings;
- * New infill developments should not use the following cladding materials: vinyl siding, mirrored glass, residential- style aluminium siding, non-architectural concrete masonry units, and corrugated metal siding; and,
- * Ensure adequate sunlight for sidewalks by building within a 45-degree angular plane measured from the opposite sidewalk curb to mitigate against tall buildings' impacts, such as the sun and shadow cast reduction. For taller buildings, upper floors should be stepped back, starting at the 4th floor, to help achieve a human scale.

Glossary

Articulation

Articulation refers to the layout or pattern of building elements, including walls, doors, roofs, windows and decorative elements, such as cornices.

Canopy

A permanent fixture designed to shelter pedestrians and display goods from weather conditions; a fixed awning.

Compatibility

When design elements such as the density, form, bulk, height, setbacks, materials, details and finishes of buildings and site features are able to coexist in harmonious, complementary, agreeable or congenial combinations with their surroundings without creating conflict with uses, function, or aesthetic designs, and minimizing impacts on each other.

Dark Sky Compliant Lighting Fixture

An outdoor light fixture that is dark sky compliant is designed to minimize the amount of blue light at night to reduce light pollution. An outdoor lighting fixture achieves dark sky compliance when it receives the IDA (International Dark Sky Association) Seal of Approval. To learn more about Dark Sky compliance, please visit Dark-Sky.org.

Green Roofs

Green roofs, also known as living roofs or eco-roofs, can be defined as a "contained" green space on top of a human-made structure. The green space can be below, at, or above grade, but in all instances, it exists separate from the ground.

Façade

The exterior wall of a building.

Human Scale

The proportional relationship of buildings, architectural design, or streetscape element that relate to human height, form, and function.

Massing

The combined effect of the height, bulk and silhouette of a building or group of buildings.

Moulding

A shaped band or strip of decoration intended to add outline or contour; can be made of many materials.

Rhythm

Refers to the pattern of building frontages along a streetscape.

45-degree Angular Plane

The 45-degree angular plane building setback is designed to transition low to medium-high rise buildings, reduce the impact of shadow-reduced sunlight, and create a sense of human scale in the downtown area.

