



## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE (DRC)

### **Our Commitment . . .**

Improve & maintain a beautiful downtown for economic development and revitalization through facilitation of building standards and access to resources.

### **Our mission statement is:**

...to serve and promote new and existing business in the downtown commercial district  
...to improve and maintain a beautiful place for economic development and revitalization through the facilitation of building standards  
...to provide access to resources for such building owners

Many of Sleepy Eye's downtown buildings are original and of significant historic relevance. The Committee strongly encourages owners and potential owners to preserve and restore these buildings with this in mind.

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## **TYPES OF REHABILITATION PROJECTS**

### **Preservation**

#### **Buildings that have experienced little change through time**

Preservation is essentially retaining and properly maintaining the existing historic aspects of a building. Buildings that retain and reflect their historic character serve as the backbone among new and altered structures.

### **Restoration**

#### **For buildings that have architectural significance, but have gone through some change**

Sleepy Eye has buildings that are historically and/or architecturally significant but have been altered. Restoration is the process of returning the structure to its original appearance.

### **Renovation**

#### **For buildings that have been modified extensively**

Many buildings benefit from some degree of renovation using modern materials and techniques that convey the character of missing original features. But it is important to preserve the integrity of an aged building. Renovation often involves the undoing of previous generations of maintenance, such as removing layers of old paint, peeling off applied wood siding, and uncovering original floors. This process involves stripping away one or more layers of "modernization".

### **Recycle**

#### **For buildings that have outlived their original use**

New uses can be found for single purpose older buildings. Railway stations, warehouses, hotels, and banks are all examples of single-use structures. Here, the challenge is to recycle buildings, whose original use is obsolete, by finding new uses that add to the economic vitality of downtown.

### **Redesign**

#### **For buildings that are sound but do not enhance the streetscape**

Inevitably there will be a certain number of buildings which are basically sound, but do not enhance the historic character the city wishes to express. However, it is important that the new façade appear appropriate and compatible in the context of the overall streetscape.

### **New Construction**

#### **For filling gaps in the streetscape**

An important element in an historic downtown is the quality of infill construction. The desired effect of new construction in a district is to complement existing structures. It is important that new construction not be allowed to dominate or overpower its more historic neighbors. Its basic design elements (size, mass, material, color) should be compatible with surrounding structures.

## PLANNING FOR YOUR REHABILITATION

### Evaluate Your Building

- Look closely at your building. It's often clear to see where changes have been made.
- Look at similar buildings along the street that may not have had major alterations.
- Look for historic photographs at the library, the Sleepy Eye Area Historical Society (Depot Museum), the Brown County Historical Society, and the Minnesota Historical Society.
- Search through storage areas, basements, garages, and attics for missing façade elements.
- Consult the building inspector and a qualified contractor before starting any work.

### Funding Your Project

- Once you have a good idea what your building looked like, you will need to decide what you can afford to do about it.
- Do not feel that you have to do everything at once.
- While your plan should reflect an overall approach, you may want to complete the actual work in phases.
- Keep in mind that there are potential sources of assistance.
- Federal tax incentives, accelerated depreciation, or tax credits may be available and should be explored as part of your budget planning.
- Consult with the local EDA (Economic Development Authority) for rehab program information. Look at the resources listed on the City of Sleepy Eye website <https://www.sleepyeye-mn.com/economic-development.html>

### Other Information

You may want to explore the resources, classes, and funding information available at [rethos.org](http://rethos.org) as they are a 501(C) devoted to rehabilitating and restoring historic properties.

## INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Some things to think about when you are inspecting a building

### MASONRY

The common materials of masonry construction are brick, building stone such as marble, granite, and limestone, cast stone, concrete block, glass block, and adobe. Masonry is generally a highly durable form of construction. However, the materials used, the quality of the mortar and workmanship, and the pattern in which the units are assembled can substantially affect the durability of the overall masonry construction.

#### **Moisture**

Masonry should be checked regularly for moisture penetration. Moisture can enter masonry through leaky roofs, gutters and down spouts, poor drainage, or a condition known as rising damp. Rising damp occurs when moisture is drawn up from the ground through brick by capillary action.

#### **Tuckpointing**

Repair 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, or damaged plaster work. Please research and/or consult a professional before beginning work.

#### **Cleaning**

Although cleaning masonry can have a dramatic impact on the appearance of a building, it should nevertheless only be done to halt deterioration, and not merely to attain a "new" façade. Cleaning and removing paint generally requires knowledgeable contractors. The Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office keeps a list of qualified cleaning contractors who operate in the State.

#### **Sandblasting**

Sandblasting is never an appropriate cleaning method for historic masonry. Sandblasting is especially harmful to brick surfaces, eroding the hard-outer layer to expose a softer, more porous surface that will weather rapidly. Be aware that sandblasting will disqualify a project from consideration when applying for federal tax credits.

#### **Painting**

In general, exposed masonry should not be painted. Unless the surface was painted from the beginning (as was sometimes the case with very soft brick), cleaning and tuckpointing of the masonry is usually preferable. A previously painted surface should be chemically cleaned. Only if chemical paint removal proves impractical (for example, due to a cementitious paint coat) should previously painted brick or stone be repainted.

#### **References:**

The following publications contain more detailed information about masonry.

Introduction to Early American Masonry: Stone, Brick, Mortar, and Plaster by Harley J. McKee, FAIA., National Trust/Columbia University Series on the Technology of Early American Buildings Vol I. New York

Preservation Briefs are available on the National Park Service website. Preservation Briefs provide information on **preserving**, **rehabilitating**, and **restoring** historic buildings.

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm>

## WOOD

One of the most popular building materials in the district is wood, due to its structural flexibility, economy, and strength.

Storefronts, cornices, brackets, and other decorative façade elements were often made of wood. These original exterior elements should be retained whenever possible.

Regular maintenance will prevent deterioration.

### **Painting**

All surfaces are primed and painted to prevent deterioration due to moisture.

### **Millwork**

Severely rotted or missing pieces? These may be reproduced by a good carpenter or millwork shop. It is best to match or at least complement the existing details when replacing woodwork.

### **References:**

Respectful Rehabilitation-Answers to Your Questions About Old Buildings by the Preservation Press, Washington D.C.

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## METALS

Cast iron and sheet metal are sometimes used in ornamental and practical roles in historic buildings. Intricate detail was reproduced in cast iron or stamped sheet metal as an architectural ornament at low cost, while practical hardware such as fences, gutters, down spouts, structural supports and roofing were done in metal as well. The decorative or utilitarian components in metal give buildings their human scale and liveliness.

### **Condition Assessment**

These architectural elements are essential to the character and appearance of your building. They should not be removed unless absolutely necessary.

Typically any aged metal work should be assessed by a professional.

### **Restoring**

Due to the potential of hazardous material please refer to the National Park Service Briefs on metal work for more information before starting any repairs.

### **References:**

Metals in America's Historic Buildings: Uses and Preservation Treatments by Margot Gayle, David W. Look, AIA, and John G. Waite, Government Printing Office, Washington D.C.

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## OTHER MATERIALS

### Stucco

Some buildings have been covered with other materials to modernize their appearance or limit the need for maintenance. Stucco is a common example. These materials often obscure important details or cause them to be removed. They can cause or intensify internal structural problems and they reduce the visual interest of a complex wall surface.

### Siding

The loss of original detail is the most obvious problem encountered with applied sidings. An impervious layer of siding can allow serious decay or insect damage to go unseen and unchecked. Moisture from condensation or interior water vapor can rot wooden materials or damage masonry in the wall.

Today there are many synthetic and metal siding types that are intended to mimic wood lap siding. Synthetic siding such as vinyl, aluminum, and steel siding should not be applied to buildings in historic downtowns. Whenever possible, such materials should be removed in the course of maintenance and improvements to properties.

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## STORE DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Whether restoring a storefront or considering a more contemporary treatment, your plan should be based on a traditional storefront design. One characteristic of the traditional commercial façade is a well-defined frame for the storefront. Look at historic photographs of your building or of similar buildings to learn the original configuration of your storefront. The same basic arrangement will be equally appropriate whether constructed using traditional or modern materials.

### DOORS, WINDOWS, AWNINGS, SIGNAGE & PAINT

Doors and windows help to define the architecture of the downtown area. The storefront with its large glass area opens the store to the street, inviting pedestrians to look and come inside. Most doors were wood frame with a large glass area to match the openness of the storefront as a whole.

#### **Storefront Entry Doors**

Storefront entry doors should present an attractive appearance and be visually appropriate for your storefront. Original doors should be retained if possible.

#### **Awnings**

The Sleepy Eye Economic Development Authority (EDA) has guidelines and programs for awnings. Suggested basic awning styles are wedge style awnings and waterfall style awnings. Suggested awning colors are burgundy, green, dark blue or others pre-approved by the EDA Board. Please check with the EDA for current information.

#### **Rear and Side Entrance**

In planning downtown improvements, the backs and sides of buildings should be considered for potential secondary business entrances.

#### **Signage**

Signage is an essential element in any commercial district. A business sign is important not only as an identifier, but equally significant as an expression of an image for the business. Do not underestimate the value of quality signage. A clear message, presented with style, will encourage passersby to venture in.

In Sleepy Eye, signs that are flat on exterior walls need no prior approval. Signs that are perpendicular to exterior walls need prior City Council approval. Consult the local EDA for further guidelines and grant programs.

#### **Paint Colors**

The City of Sleepy Eye strongly recommends that property owners regularly keep their buildings painted. There is no clear rule for paint colors in a stylistically mixed group of buildings like those in the downtown area, other than to avoid bright or unusual colors. Building owners may need to work with a design consultant to choose appropriate colors for their building.

## ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

#### **Original Detail:**

Architectural details should be retained on existing structures within the historic downtown. These features are crucial to the historic and architectural character of the building.

It is essential that architectural detailing be carefully maintained in order to ensure its long term survival

□ **New Construction Details:**

New construction should mirror existing details or display contemporary details that harmonize with its neighbors. Modern artificial siding frequently covers cornices or window trim and involves the destruction of much architectural detail. This practice is not appropriate.

□ **Added Elements:**

Necessities such as electric meters and boxes, condensing units, gas meters, solar panels, air conditioners, television antennae and satellite dishes are contemporary features. They can seriously impair the visual qualities of historic architecture if improperly located. All added elements should be located on the roof or to the rear of building and screened by appropriate plantings or fencing. Solar panels and television aerials should be situated as far out of public view as possible.

### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

If your building will remain vacant while planning and preparation is in progress, we strongly recommend that you cover the windows facing Main Street with inexpensive curtains or install a simple window display. This dramatically improves the streetscape while you prepare for a renovation.

We strongly recommend not using your building for storage. If you must do so, cover the windows to block the view from the street. Also be aware that the Fire Marshall may inspect and require you to comply with the fire codes.

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## **Contact Information:**

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507-794-5505 (leave message) or 507-920-5043 (cell)

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