

## Administrative



# Historic District Design Guidelines

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## Preface

Main Street McMinnville was organized by members of the Warren County Heritage Alliance in 1999. It operates with a 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt charter, with a working Board and a paid Director funded through a city-county cooperative effort. One of the first priorities of the Main Street program was to draw boundaries for a downtown historic district and to adopt design guidelines for that area. After several public meetings facilitated by Nancy Jane Baker, certified local government coordinator for the Tennessee Historical Commission, an initial set of guidelines was drafted. A Design Committee formatted the information into guidelines that were adopted by the City of McMinnville. The initial historic district was divided into two areas, with residential districts to be phased in later. Additional guidelines will be required for the residential districts.

With heritage tourism on the rise in Tennessee, interest in preserving the “best of the past” has increased across our state. Our city hopes to increase an awareness of the historical significance of McMinnville and to revitalize the downtown area through economic development and investment. Neighboring cities have adopted similar measures with resounding success. Consequently, these guidelines are not meant to prohibit individual property usage, but to protect and give direction to those who maintain ownership in our downtown area.

It is with this purpose in mind that these guidelines are adopted.

# Historic District Design Guidelines

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## Approach / Purpose

The principal approach in design guidelines is the emphasis of preservation over complete restoration. The approach is illustrated through the use of such words as repair, retain, maintain, and protect. It is important to repair original materials rather than replace them; retain original storefront elements such as cast-iron; maintain original brick cornices because they are integral in displaying historic character; and protect the original features of an upper façade to protect a building's integrity.

This manual is divided into several chapters dealing with different types of action: alterations to the site and setting, rehabilitation, new infill construction, and demolition. Illustrated descriptions of the architectural details present in downtown McMinnville have been included to familiarize property owners and merchants with the distinguishing features of the commercial area.

### **What Design Guidelines Do:**

1. Maintain and reinforce district character.
2. Guide and improve district growth and development.
3. Protect property values by avoiding inappropriate design change.
4. Protect the visual integrity of the district.
5. Provide a basis for objective design review.
6. Provide educational material for contractors, merchants, and property owners.

### **What Design Guidelines Cannot Do:**

1. Limit growth as it applies to area land use/zoning issues.
2. Limit the use of space within a building (design review applies only to the exterior of district buildings.)
3. Guidelines are intended to guide design change, not to prevent change.
4. Review routine maintenance.

Design guidelines are a set of standards used in specially designated districts to preserve the unique and valued qualities of the district. The most common form of design guidelines are those applied to historic districts to regulate urban design and architectural character of the district, as in the case of these guidelines for the downtown McMinnville historic district. Over 1,000 communities across the country presently utilize such districts.

The authority for design guidelines lies in the City's historic preservation ordinance, which designates the district and creates the design review body to make decisions on applications for work within the district. Design guidelines provide that review body with an objective set of standards on which to base its decisions, and they pertain only to design issues, as opposed to land use.

The benefits of design guidelines are numerous, including the preservation of affordable housing stock, the stabilization and enhancement of property values, protection from intruding buildings, aesthetics, and the nurturing of civic pride. Furthermore, the sensitive and substantial rehabilitation of income-producing historic buildings eligible for the National Register of Historic Places can qualify property owners for the 20% federal investment tax credit.

It is important to note that design guidelines are just what their name implies—"guidelines." Unlike the historic preservation ordinance that serves as their legal basis of authority, the design guidelines should be used with a fair

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## Approach / Purpose (continued)

measure of flexibility and discretion. There will, undoubtedly, be situations in which a rigid application of the design guidelines would not be in the best interest of a particular property, the district, and historic preservation as a whole. While it may have been possible for these design guidelines to account for many of these “exceptions to the rule” ahead of time, such an approach is not advisable.

Experience has shown that design guidelines that are full of footnote-like exceptions tend to be more confusing than useful. Rather than having guidelines that are convoluted and difficult to understand by the average property owner, it is best that the implementing design review body acknowledge that exceptions to the rule will, indeed, occur from time to time, and that these should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

## Design Guidelines & Economic Benefits

- **Economics**

Design review guidelines are developed for communities and historic downtown areas primarily for educational and economic reasons. By adhering to design and review standards a downtown area can maintain its uniqueness and promote individual property values. Guidelines assist property owners in understanding the best ways to maintain and preserve historic structures and to guide new construction. Design guidelines are written to affect a positive change in the visual appearance of an area.

- **Owner Investment Protection**

Design review guidelines ensure that a property owner’s investment in a historic area will be protected from insensitive rehabilitation and new construction, which could result in lower property values. Downtown McMinnville is unique through its history and architectural character and future marketing should capitalize upon these attributes for economic development.

- **Local Control**

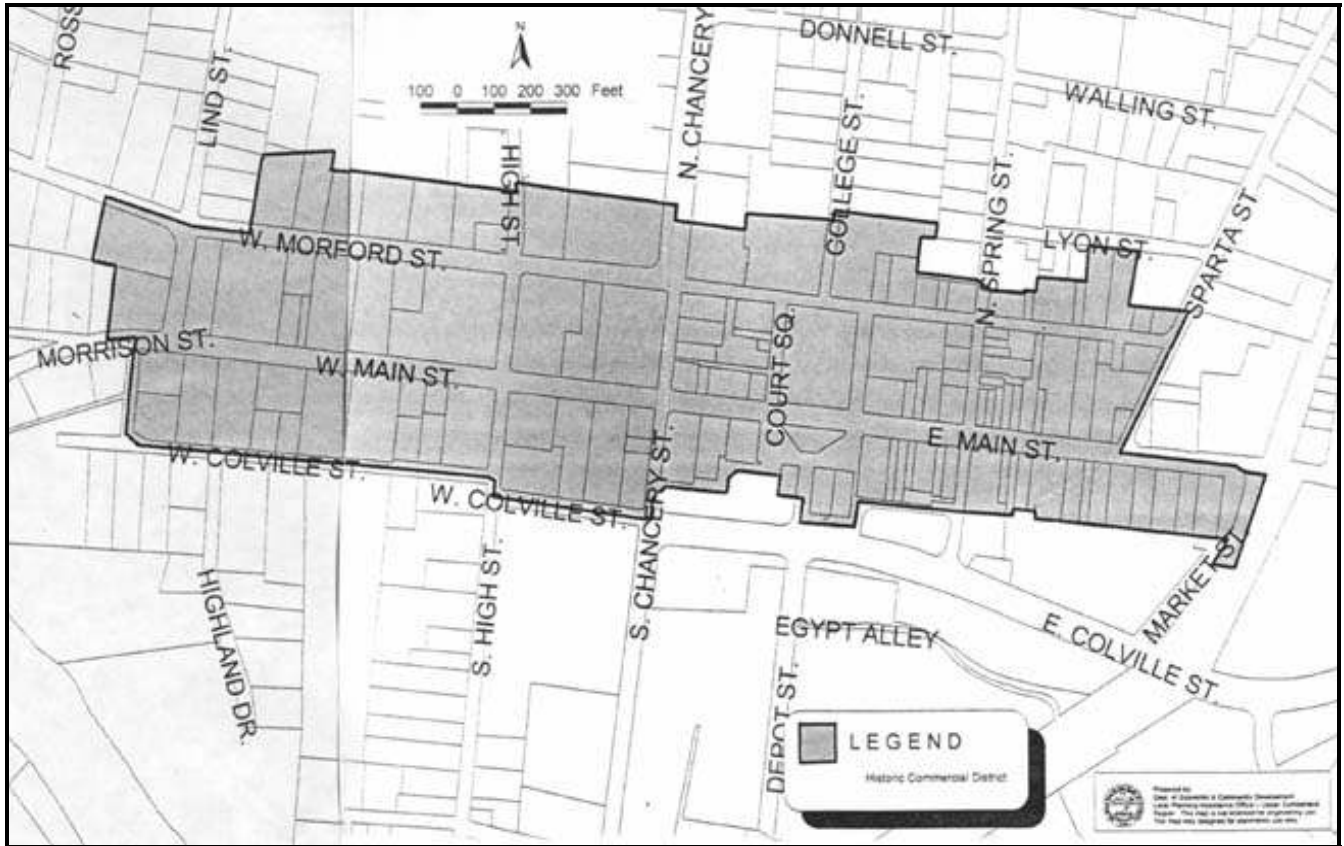
Design review guidelines are adopted and administered by local citizens and property owners through the Historical Zoning Commission which meets on the second Tuesday of each month at the Blue Municipal Building.

- **Community Promotion**

McMinnville is one of thousands of communities to have recognized that preserving its historic resources makes good sense. A vital and attractive downtown area promotes a city’s overall quality of life and illustrates its commitment to its heritage and identity. Design review maintains and enhances this character.

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## Map Of The Historic District



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## Application, Review, Approval Process

In order to protect and enhance the historic significance and physical characteristics that make downtown McMinnville such a special place, the City of McMinnville Historic Zoning Commission (HZC), oversees all physical alterations in the district. Someone contemplating an alteration to a district property should follow the following steps:

### **Step 1: Determine if Approval is Required**

In general, any noticeable alteration to a building, new construction or demolition requires HZC approval in the form of a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). A COA is not required for routine maintenance, exterior paint colors, or interior alterations. See Section 1.6 for a list of specific activities to verify approval requirement.

### **Step 2: Investigate Financial Incentive Possibilities**

Contact the Main Street Director to see if your property qualifies for any of the financial incentives being offered for rehab work on historic district properties.

### **Step 3: Apply for a COA**

Complete and submit an application form to the Director of Building and Codes at 1266 Belmont Drive. The phone number is (931) 473-1204.

The degree of information required to accompany an application form will depend upon the magnitude and complexity of the work proposed. However, in general, the following types of information will be needed:

#### Alteration of an existing building or new construction

- Photograph of the building and/or an elevation drawing of the area to be affected.
- Detailed description and drawings of work to be done, including all relevant dimensions.
- Information about materials to be used, referring to catalogs or product descriptions provided by the building material supplier.

#### Demolition

- Photograph of the building
- Information relating to the building's history and significance
- Information relating to the building's physical condition
- Information relating to the building's market and financial circumstances
- Information on the future plans for the building's site.

### **Step 4: Assist the HZC with Application Review**

It is usually helpful to meet with the Director of Building and Codes before and/or after submitting an application to assist them in clearly understanding the proposed work. This may include showing the Director of Building and Codes and HZC members the subject property. The HZC may recommend revisions to the proposed work for the applicant to consider prior to a formal HZC meeting.

### **Step 5: Attend the Scheduled HZC Meeting**

This meeting will allow the applicant to elaborate on the proposed work and answer any specific questions from the HZC and staff. Applications are typically either approved as proposed, approved with conditions, or denied with an explanation.

### **Step 6: Obtain a Building Permit and Begin Work**

Not all work requiring a COA will require a building permit. Refer to Section 1.6 of these guidelines to verify the need for a building permit. If a COA and a building permit (if needed) are approved, the applicant may begin work.

# Historic District Design Guidelines

## Approval / Permit Guideline Chart

Type Of Work	No Approval Required	COA Required	Building Permit Required
Addition		X	X
Architectural Details (brackets, shingles, cornices, etc)		X	X
Awnings		X	X
Brickwork		X	X
Chimneys		X	X
Curb Cuts			X
Decks		X	X
Demolition		X	X
Doors		X	
Fencing, retaining walls		X	
Fire Escapes		X	X
Foundations		X	X
Garbage collectors (institutional/commercial)	X		
Glass replacement (matching original)	X		
Glass replacement (not matching original)		X	
Historic glass removal		X	
Gutters/boxed		X	
Handicap ramps		X	X
Hanging gutters / downspouts	X		
Landscaping		X	No permit, but needs to consult with Urban Forester and Master Plan
Light fixtures / exterior		X	
Masonry cleaning		X	
Material changes (siding, metal, brick, etc.)		X	X
Mechanical systems (window units, exhaust, fans, etc.)		X	
Moving buildings		X	X

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Type Of Work	No Approval Required	COA Required	Building Permit Required
New Construction Primary Structures Outbuildings Additions (including porch enclosures, dormers, etc)		X	X
Paint Colors	X		
Paint removal from masonry		X	
Parking lots (pavement and landscaping)		X	No permit, but needs to consult with Urban Forester and Master Plan
Porches (columns, cornices, railings, detailing, etc.)		X	
Public right-of-way improvements (walks, paving, landscaping)		X	X (Public Works)
Retaining walls		X	
Roofs (materials, changes in shape, caves, etc.)		X	X
Satellite dishes		X	X
Screens		X	
Shutters		X	
Siding		X	
Signs		X	X
Skylights		X	X
Solar collectors		X	X
Staircases (exterior)		X	X
Steps		X	
Storm windows, storm doors, security doors		X	
Swimming pools		X	X
Weatherstripping, caulking	X		
Windows (alterations to sashes, etc.)		X	