

Sauk City Downtown Design Guidelines

**Final Draft
June 7, 2006**



INTENT

The Sauk City Downtown Design Guidelines were developed to improve and protect the appearance, value, and function of downtown properties. The guidelines are intended to allow for creativity and variety within a framework of basic design parameters that will reinforce the best attributes of our historic downtown. The Village desires buildings that will enhance our downtown's appeal and urban character and improve the relationship between the downtown area and the Wisconsin River.

The Village recognizes the need to be flexible when applying these guidelines to unique and/or historic sites. Proposals to re-create or restore historic structures will be given serious consideration for waivers of "required" guidelines as necessary. The Village seeks a genuinely collaborative design process that rewards creativity and quality with opportunities to expedite the approval process.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why has the Village adopted these guidelines?

Downtown revitalization is identified as an economic development objective in the Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Plan, and design guidelines are specifically recommended as one of the implementation tools to "enhance the downtown as the center of government services, business, and tourism." See also the statement of intent at left.

I own an existing building in the Downtown Design District - will I be expected to change my building to meet these guidelines?

No. Changes are not required. However, if you apply for a permit to modify or add a feature covered by these guidelines, you will be required to follow the guidelines that address that feature. Typical examples of changes to existing buildings that require a permit and must follow these guidelines include new siding, awnings, signs, and exterior lighting. It is not the intent of these guidelines to require alterations beyond the scope of a proposed change, meaning that, for example, window replacements will not automatically trigger structural changes or awning changes. See also the statement of intent at left.

Some of the guidelines use words like "shall" or "prohibited", others use words like "should" or "encouraged". What is the difference?

Guidelines with "shall" and "prohibited" are requirements that must be met. These critical words are highlighted. All other guidelines are suggestions that the Village would like applicants to consider, sometimes strongly consider. Applicants that do not believe they can or should follow a "required" guideline must negotiate with the Plan Commission for a waiver of that requirement.

I believe some of these guidelines are difficult or impossible to fulfill on my site - can I get a waiver?

As described above, a waiver is needed only when applicants request an exception to a “required” guideline. Waivers are granted by the Plan Commission on a case-by-case basis and are decided based on the applicant’s ability to demonstrate one or more of the following conditions:

- A) the required design feature cannot be met on the site*
- B) the requirement would create undue hardship for the applicant as compared to other properties in the district*
- C) the intent of the guideline can be successfully met with an alternative design*

How does the approval process work?

Applicants should review this Handbook at the beginning of the design process. The following items must be submitted for review by Village staff and the Sauk City Plan Commission:

- Design Guidelines Checklist (see last pages of Handbook)*
- Illustrations, Diagrams, Samples, and Spec Sheets*

Village Staff will review submissions for completeness and place the proposal on the agenda for the next scheduled Plan Commission Meeting. Applicants should submit required materials at least one week before the meeting to allow time for staff review and distribution of materials. Submissions made less than one week before a Plan Commission meeting may be scheduled for the following month’s meeting.

Applicants that wish to appeal the decision of Plan Commission may do so to the Village Board. Requests for appeal should be made to the Village Administrator.

DOWNTOWN DESIGN DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

These guidelines apply to properties on both sides of Water Street from Carolina Street to Bates Street. The map at right outlines this area and illustrates existing land uses as identified in 2003 through the Village’s comprehensive planning process.

The northern two blocks, between Bates Street and Van Buren Street, are identified as the “Transition Area”, while the three blocks south of Van Buren are identified as the “Downtown Core”.

The Transition Area is generally less urban in character and has deeper building setbacks, shorter buildings, and pitched roofs. Some of the Downtown Design Guidelines apply specifically to just the Transition Area or just the Downtown Core.

Section One: Site Plan

Intent: To ensure adequate design and review of site-related characteristics

1.1 A site plan **shall** be submitted with the Design Guideline Checklist and **shall** show all of the important features planned for the site, including, as applicable:

- Trash and recycling container placement
- Pedestrian pathways
- Vehicular parking and circulation
- Landscaping
- Stormwater management features
- Lighting

Section Two: Front Yard Setback

Intent: To establish and preserve urban character

- 2.1. Downtown Core: all buildings **shall** be built to the front property line.
- 2.2. Transition Zone: New buildings should be built as close as possible to the front property line. Front yard parking is strongly discouraged.

Section Three: Building Orientation

Intent: To focus urban character and activity toward Water Street.

- 3.1. The primary (front) façade **shall** be parallel to the centerline of Water Street
- 3.2. The primary building entrance **shall** be located on the Water Street façade.

Section Four: Parking

Intents: To protect and enhance pedestrian paths.

To establish and preserve urban character

- 4.1. Shared parking and access between properties is encouraged to improve business access and reduce the number of curb cuts.
- 4.2. Rear parking is encouraged, and on-site parking in front of the building is strongly discouraged.
- 4.3. Pedestrian circulation routes should be separated from vehicular parking and circulation by vegetative buffers whenever possible. Where parking spots abut a sidewalk or trail a planted strip at least 4 feet in width **shall** be established and maintained.

Section Five: Service Areas

Intent: To improve the appearance of the Downtown Area

- 5.1. Trash and recycling containers and mechanical equipment (gas meters, air conditioners, etc.) **shall** be located or screened so that they are not visible from a public street or from the river. This includes rooftop mechanical equipment.
- 5.2. Shared garbage and recycling facilities are encouraged where practical as a means to meet screening requirements and preserve access needs.
- 5.3. Screening should be compatible with building architecture and other site features.

Section Six: Stormwater

Intent: To reduce the peak rate and volume and improve the quality of stormwater runoff from downtown properties.

- 6.1. The use of rain gardens and bio-retention basins to collect run-off and filter pollutants is encouraged, where practical.
- 6.2. Porous paving materials are strongly encouraged for the purpose of stormwater infiltration, where practical, especially in parking stalls.
- 6.3. Green roofs are encouraged.

Section Seven: River yards

Intents: To improve the appearance of Downtown Sauk City as seen from the river.
To increase the use of river yards for recreational and tourist-oriented activity.

- 7.1. Outdoor storage of any kind **shall** be screened from view from the river or the Highway 12 bridge.
- 7.2. Existing driveway access through private property to neighboring parcels should be maintained. Structures that would further impede this access are **prohibited**.
- 7.3. Patios and decks that encourage activity and use of the river yard are encouraged
- 7.4. Business uses facing the river are encouraged, especially recreation and tourism-oriented uses, including restaurants.
- 7.5. Pedestrian connections to the riverside trail are strongly encouraged. Existing pedestrian connections from the street to the river should be preserved if possible.
- 7.6. All plantings within 50 feet of the river edge **shall** be native, non-invasive species.

Section Eight: Building Height

Intent: To establish and maintain a consistent street wall.

- 8.1. Maximum building height is limited by the zoning ordinance to 40 feet (3 stories) plus up to five additional feet for a cornice.
- 8.2. Minimum building height **shall** be 16 feet (1.5 stories), measured from the sidewalk to the lowest point of the roof or parapet wall. A full two stories are encouraged wherever feasible.

Section Nine: Building Proportion

Intent: To reinforce the existing character of development.

- 9.1. Most of Sauk City’s historic downtown buildings are “vertically proportioned”, meaning they are taller than they are wide and/or their façade design emphasizes vertical proportions. This is a fundamental characteristic that should be reinforced.
- 9.2. New buildings in the Downtown Core **shall** establish vertical proportions for the street façade, and for the elements within that façade (windows, doors, structural expression, etc.). Any building with a total width equal to or greater than its height **shall** utilize one or more of the following techniques to establish vertical proportions: expression of structural bays, variation in material, variation in building plane (projections or recessed bays), articulation of the roofline or cornice to emphasize a vertical line in the façade, and use of vertically-proportioned windows.
- 9.3. New buildings in the Transition Zone are encouraged to have vertical proportions utilizing the techniques listed in 9.2.
- 9.4. Elements of each street-facing façade (doors, windows, structural bays, etc) **shall** establish harmony of proportion with each other and the overall façade.
- 9.5. *A diagram illustrating proportions of each street-facing façade **shall** be submitted with the Design Guideline Checklist.*

Section Ten: Base, Middle, Top

Intent: To reinforce the existing character of development.

- 10.1. The street façade of all new buildings **shall** utilize details or changes in materials to create a discernible base, middle, and top. The base **shall** be at least two (2) feet in height, but may include the entire first floor. The top **shall** be at least one (1) foot in height.

- 10.2. The base of the building should include elements that relate to the human scale. These should include doors and windows, texture, projections, awnings and canopies, ornament, etc.
- 10.3. *A façade diagram that indicates the base, middle, and top of the building **shall** be submitted with the Design Guideline Checklist.*

Section Eleven: Horizontal Expression Lines

Intent: To reinforce the existing character of development.

- 11.1. Expression lines are vertical or horizontal linear elements on a façade, usually formed by a projected or recessed feature that creates a visible shadow line. Horizontal expression lines are used to differentiate layers of the façade, i.e. base, middle, and top.
- 11.2. New buildings **shall** utilize a horizontal expression line that projects at least 2 inches from the building façade to articulate the transition between the first floor and upper floors.
- 11.3. New buildings should incorporate horizontal expression lines from existing buildings within the same block whenever practical.
- 11.4. *A façade diagram that illustrates horizontal expression lines **shall** be submitted with the Design Guideline Checklist. This diagram should use accurately measured sketches of at least two existing buildings on each side of the proposed building (4 total) and identify any horizontal expression lines on those buildings.*

Section Twelve: Rooflines/Cornices

Intents: To reinforce the existing character of development.

To provide variety and visual interest.

- 12.1. A positive visual termination at the top of the building **shall** be created with a gable or decorative cornice that projects forward of the primary building plane
- 12.2. Downtown Core: parapet walls with cornices are encouraged, pitched roofs or pediment roofs may be approved if appropriate to the site and style of the building. Unique and decorative cornice designs are encouraged to generate character and building identity.
- 12.3. Transition Zone: pitched roofs are preferred, parapet walls and cornices may be approved if appropriate to the site and style of the building.

- 12.4 *An accurately-measured elevation drawing that illustrates the full rooflines of the proposed building and any neighboring buildings **shall** be submitted with the Design Guidelines Checklist.*

Section Thirteen: Transparency

Intents: To enliven and activate Water Street.

To reinforce the existing character of development.

- 13.1. Downtown buildings should activate Water Street by providing significant visibility through the ground floor façade to activities or displays within the building.
- 13.2. At least 35% of the ground floor façade **shall** be transparent glass. The ground floor façade is defined as the entire width of the building from the sidewalk to the horizontal expression line dividing the ground floor from the upper floor(s).
- 13.3. Upper floors should have windows but should be less transparent than the ground floor – the percentage of façade area above the ground floor horizontal expression line that is glass **shall not** exceed 20%.
- 13.4. *A diagram illustrating the percentage transparent glass on each part of the facade **shall** be submitted with the Design Guidelines Checklist.*

Section Fourteen: Secondary Building Facades

Intents: To reinforce the existing character of development.

To improve the appearance of Downtown Sauk City as seen from the river.

- 14.1. All exposed sides of a building are encouraged to use similar or complementary materials as used on the front facade.
- 14.2. Any secondary façade facing a public street (corner buildings) **shall** utilize the same design features as the primary front façade, including expression lines and cornice details.
- 14.3. Any rear façade facing the river should incorporate a public entrance and should be treated with similar design attention as the front façade.
- 14.4. *A detailed elevation of each exposed building façade **shall** be submitted with the Design Guideline Checklist. Materials and colors should be noted and samples provided.*

Section Fifteen: Building Materials

Intents: To establish and reinforce traditional character.

To promote the use of quality, long-lasting materials.

- 15.1. Preferred exterior finish materials: kiln-fired brick, stucco, terra cotta, wood siding and details, fiber cement siding.
- 15.2. Allowed exterior finish materials: vinyl siding (maximum uninterrupted wall width **shall not** exceed 24 feet), high-quality cultured stone or brick veneer.
- 15.3. **Prohibited** materials: gravel aggregate materials, stone or cultured stone in a random ashlar pattern, rough-sawn wood siding, polished stone, panelized products.
- 15.4. *A picture and sample of each exterior material and a façade illustration that indicates colors and materials **shall** be submitted with the Design Guideline Checklist.*

Section Sixteen: Awnings

Intent: To reinforce the existing character of development.

- 16.1. Ground floor awnings are encouraged.
- 16.2. If used, awnings **shall** project at least 24 inches from the building face.
- 16.3. Downtown Core awning materials: shingles and wood are **prohibited**; fabric or soft vinyl over a metal frame is preferred.
- 16.4. Awnings may be lit from above, and/or may feature lighting beneath to illuminate the sidewalk, however glowing awnings (backlit, light shows through the material) are **prohibited**.
- 16.5. Canopies (flat projections from the building façade) are **prohibited**.
- 16.6. Consistency with awnings on neighboring buildings is strongly encouraged.
- 16.7. Awnings **shall** be mounted below the horizontal expression line that defines the ground floor.
- 16.8. Awning colors should relate to and complement the primary colors of the building façade.
- 16.9. *All awnings must be approved by the Village Plan Commission. The following items **shall** be submitted for review purposes: facade elevation including neighboring structures, material and color sample.*

Section Seventeen: Balconies and Bay Windows

Intent: To reinforce the existing character of development.

- 17.1. Projections over the sidewalk are allowed, including balconies, bay windows, and awnings.
- 17.2. Projections **shall not** extend more than 36 inches beyond the property line at the sidewalk, except awnings, which may extend to within 36 inches of the street curb.

Section Eighteen: Signage

Intent: To promote attractive signage that complements the architectural character of the building.

- 18.1. Preferred sign types include building mounted signs that face the street, window signs, projecting signs, and awning signs.
- 18.2. Exterior signs that face the street (i.e. mounted against the wall) **shall** be located below the horizontal expression line that defines the ground floor façade.
- 18.3. Two-sided projecting signs that face up and down the street may be located above the horizontal expression line that defines the ground floor façade. The sign itself **shall not** be greater than 30 inches in width or 48 inches in height, shall not be greater in width than in height, and shall not extend more than 36 inches from the building face.
- 18.4. Rooftop signs are **prohibited**.
- 18.5. Signs should be simple and easy to read.
- 18.6. Sign colors should relate to and complement the primary colors of the building façade.
- 18.7. Sign design and placement should fit the character of the building and should not obscure architectural details.
- 18.8. Downtown Core: The following sign types are **prohibited** outside the building : back-lit, neon, or scrolling LED. Building-mounted light fixtures to illuminate signage are encouraged, and any such lights **shall** be mounted above the sign and directed downward.
- 18.9. Transition Zone: The following sign types are strongly discouraged: back-lit, neon, or scrolling LED. Free-standing signs are permitted, and monument-style signs are strongly encouraged. Any exterior lights should be mounted above the sign and directed downward.

Section Nineteen: Colors

Intents: To reinforce the existing character of development.

To provide variety and visual interest.

- 19.1. A three-color paint scheme is encouraged, including a “base” color on the majority of the building surface, “trim” colors used on building features such as window and door trims and cornices, and “accent” colors on signs, awnings and other architectural details.
- 19.2. Muted tones are preferred for the primary façade color.
- 19.3. Bright colors are discouraged for the primary façade color, but are acceptable as a secondary color to highlight expression lines or details.
- 19.4. Day-glo or fluorescent colors are **prohibited**.
- 19.5. Colors **must** be indicated on the façade elevation that illustrates materials, and a color sample for each color **shall** be submitted with this illustration and the Design Guidelines Checklist.

Section Twenty: Lighting

Intents: To reinforce the existing character of development.

To promote effective and attractive exterior lighting that does not produce glare or light pollution.

- 20.1. Exterior lighting should be designed to complement the character of the building and provide a pleasing relationship with adjoining properties and the public sidewalk.
- 20.2. All exterior lights **shall** be full-cut-off fixtures to minimize glare and light pollution. This means no light escapes above 90 degrees from vertical.
- 20.3. *Spec sheets shall be submitted with the Design Guideline Checklist for each exterior light fixture to be used.*

Sections Twenty-One to Twenty-Three: Restoration and Preservation

Intent: To promote the appropriate preservation and restoration of existing architectural features in Downtown Sauk City.

- 21.1. Whenever possible, original features and materials such as cornices, windows and storefronts should be restored or reconstructed. Firms that specialize in historic preservation are recommended both for cleaning and repair (contractors) and for wholesale recreation of historic elements (architects). If restoration is not

feasible, new elements should be designed that replicate or are at least consistent with the character, materials and design of the original building.

- 21.2. Architectural details should not be obscured or covered up by siding, awnings, or signage. Where such features have previously been obscured, the removal of the offending feature or material is strongly encouraged.
- 22.1 Replacement of historic doors and windows is often advisable to improve energy efficiency. Replacements should maintain the historic character of the building by replicating or closely matching the original materials, proportion, design, etc.
- 23.1 Painting of natural brick or stone is strongly discouraged when those materials are in good condition. Property owners should consult with a professional cleaner to identify cleaning methods that will prevent damage to the brick or stone surfaces.