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# OWOSSO DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

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**City of Owosso Downtown Historic District Commission**

December 16, 2019



Provided by:



**OWOSSO**  
**MAIN STREET**

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# CERTIFICATE

**If you plan to make any changes to the exterior of your building located with the Historic District, you will need to get a Certificate of Appropriateness (CofA)**

## **BEFORE BUYING MATERIALS OR BEGINNING WORK:**

1. **CALL** the Building Department administrator to confirm the project is in the historic district, and to determine if the property is contributing or non-contributing. This will direct you to the proper guideline, and determine if you qualify for for an administer review, or if you need to appear at a meeting.
2. **READ** the guiltiness in this document for the type of improvements you are proposing so you are prepared.
3. **COMPLETE** the application and meet with the Historic District Staff liaison to assure the application is complete. If the application is complete, the Historic District Commission (HDC) may deny or table the application causing delays.
4. Make sure you application is complete with drawings or samples if necessary.
5. The HDC review each application as an individual case and determines if the proposed improvements meet the Historic District Guidelines and ***The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation***.
6. If you have a complex project, it is recommended that your contractor or architect attend the meeting with you. This assures that all questions can be answered and all participants understand what is proposed & approved.
7. If your application is denied, you may work with staff to make changes that may be more appropriate to the district.
8. If the application is denied, you may file an appeal to the State Historic Preservation Review Board within 60 days after the date you received the written decision of the denial.



**THE APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS CAN BE FOUND ON THE CITY OF OWOSSO WEBSITE AT:**

**[HTTP://WWW.CI.OWOSSO.MI.US/GOVERNMENT/DOWNTOWN-HISTORIC-DISTRICT-COMMISSION](http://www.ci.owosso.mi.us/Government/Downtown-Historic-District-Commission)**

**PLEASE CONTACT JOSH ADAMS AT 989.725.0571 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.**

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# WHY PRESERVATION?

## THE BENEFITS OF PRESERVATION



• Our Cities are like tapestries - their history, character, and individuality are the fabric which they are woven. Buildings provide a wonderful sense of place; their beauty and scale inspire and connect us to our past, and they are invaluable cultural, aesthetic, and educational resources. Preservation ensures that future generations will have the opportunity to appreciate the legacy of Owosso's rich past. And you have the bonus of knowing that your downtown is protected and cherished as well.

• Historic buildings are intrinsically "green," as reusing an existing building has substantially lower environmental impact than building a new one. Preservation and rehabilitation minimize the wasteful loss of materials while maintaining a distinctive sense of place for the entire district.

• Traditional materials tend to reduce associated landfill waste and replacement costs, as well as potentially increasing a property's value associated with authentic, fighter quality construction.

• The historic building or structure already exists, and the energy required to fabricate the lumber, bricks, windows and doors was expended long ago.

• New construction often includes demolition of an existing building (construction waste comprises approximately 25% to

30% of landfills), in addition to the fabrication of new construction materials creating additional waste, while the preservation of an existing building conserves landfill space.

- The most appropriate materials for the majority of preservation projects are often historic materials rather than non-biodegradable manufactured products, such as vinyl and/or plastics.
- While some of the recommendations in these *Guidelines* do not represent the least expensive options, the HDC strongly believes that selecting a better quality option will be less costly in the long-term.
- An immediate benefit is that using traditional materials and construction methods tends to be more historically appropriate and sustainable. Another benefit is that traditional materials generally have a longer life-cycle because they are appropriate for the local climate, requiring less frequent replacement.
- In making improvements and carefully maintaining your historical building, you are participating in preservation. Not only of your own property, but the entire district. As you proceed through the planning process for improvements consider these issues:
  - What makes it special and how can I preserve the historic sense of place?
  - What are my surroundings? What impact will my plans have on the integrity of the surrounding area?
  - Identify and think about how important the proposed adaptations are to the continuing use of the property.
  - Can I make repairs or is replacement the only option?



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# WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

## **CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES:**

Resources which contribute to the historic character of the district (most of which will be over 50-years old) may be described by:

1. The original design is largely intact, with its original ornament and detail. Maintenance and repair may be needed, but new design work is not necessary; or
2. The original design can be discerned, but some elements have been removed or replaced with later designs. If early photographs or architectural drawings are available, exact reconstruction of missing details will be possible. Otherwise, new but compatible designs may be necessary.
3. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation should be followed. The guidelines in this document provide greater detail, but are consistent with Secretary's Standards. For these contributing resources, the guidelines in this document provide the detail you need for planning and fulfilling the fantastic goal of preserving the historic character of your Downtown.



On contributing structures, owners will be encouraged to retain historic features, use original materials and repair rather than replace when feasible. Maintenance is paramount to preservation.

## **NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES:**

These are resources that do not contribute because they are:

1. Over 50-years old but original design has been significantly altered. Even when documentation of the original design and detail is available, the Commission must decide if enough remains to justify restoration to the original design. The guidelines for additional and new construction will be applied.
2. Less than 50-years old but are of good architectural quality for the period in which they were built, and they have become important parts of the context of the contributing resources in the district. Proposed changes should be judged against the standards of the period of the building. Changes should be consistent with the structure's own style, form, scale, relationship of the openings, selection of materials, details and other features.
3. Other less than 50-years old and are of less than exemplary architectural design. The guidelines for additions and new construction will be applied.

Non-contributing resources are not held to the same standards and guidelines for contributing resources and allow for more flexibility.

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# SECRETARY OF INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

*From The National Park Service US Department of the Interior [www.nps.gov/history](http://www.nps.gov/history)*

1. **RECOGNIZE APPROPRIATE USE**
  - A property shall be used for its historic purpose or shall be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. **RETAIN HISTORIC CHARACTER**
  - The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. **AVOID CONJECTURE**
  - Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding a conjectural feature or architectural elements from other historic buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. **MAINTAIN SIGNIFICANT ALTERATIONS**
  - Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. **PRESERVE CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES AND WORKMANSHIP**
  - Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
6. **REPAIR BEFORE YOU REPLACE MATERIALS**
  - Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. **AVOID DAMAGING TREATMENTS**
  - Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. **CONSIDER ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES**
  - Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. **MAKE ADDITIONS AND ALTERATIONS COMPATIBLE**
  - New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials which characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. **MAKE ALTERATIONS REVERSIBLE**
  - New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment shall be unimpaired.

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# GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout these many pages of guidelines, you will find specific statements about parts of a historic resource, but remember, these general guidelines apply as well.

Your historic bustling is like a baby. It needs lots of care and attention to stay healthy. Look past the peeling paint to identify and think about the elements and characteristics which are original, and those that are later but contribute to its history or architectural significance. **With preservation, the details do matter.**

You should try to preserve all features, components and details which are original to the building to retain authenticity. They should not be covered with signs or new material. Features which are damaged should be repaired whenever possible and practical.

When a wood feature is missing it should be replaced with a new feature based on accurate documentation of the original design OR a new design compatible in scale, size, and material with the historic building and district. If a detail of a painted metal feature such as a decorative cornice is missing or deteriorated, replacement in kind may not be feasible, and the replication of the detail in fiberglass, wood or aluminum may be appropriate.

Look around you, at the character of the surroundings and think about the impact of the proposed changes on the integrity of the surrounding area.

Think about how important the proposed adaptations are to continue the use of new use.

Exterior materials should be cleaned with the gentlest method possible. Sand blasting and power washing or the use of torches can seriously damage materials.

The guidelines do not recommend the use of substitute siding or trim in any form on an existing building. It rarely replicates the dimensions or appearance of original materials. The application must show the following:

- The substitute material will replace other substitute material on the structure; and/or
- The cost of restoring the original material is unreasonable, judged in relation to the finished value of the property; or
- The original materials (or other suitable alternatives), or skills necessary to apply those materials are unavailable; or
- There is an emergency (probably temporary) need to provide the material in a time period which does not allow use of the original material (or other suitable alternative).

The use of vinyl or aluminum is not permitted on new construction or as a first time application on existing structures.

The Commission does NOT review appropriateness of colors, however colors that are historically associated with period are recommended.



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# MASONRY

The cleaning of masonry of a historic structure may be appropriate with care taken that the cleaning technique used will not cause damage to the surface. The natural weathering and discoloration or patina of masonry materials is to be respected as the appearance was achieved as a result of the original designer's selection of material. The use of cleaning technique that would totally remove this natural patina should be avoided.

Red clay brick and Waverly stone in particular have soft and delicate texture that require gentle methods of cleaning.

Masonry repairs should retain the original or existing appearance of the masonry. If masonry is to be replaced, the new material should match the original or existing material in color, texture and hardness. Mortar should replicate the original or existing mortar in color, consistency, design and hardness. For example, older brick walls were often laid with mortar of a higher lime content than is now common, and sometimes with dark gray or black mortar and finished with recessed joints.

Previously unpainted masonry should not be painted. Sealants should not be used unless necessary to protect from water. The use of sealants is subject to review by the Commission.

Unless old paint or other coatings can be removed without damage to the masonry a painted surface should be repainted rather than stripped of old paint.

Primary chimneys should be retained, even if their function is eliminated by modern utilities. Smaller secondary chimneys not so visually important and removal may be considered by the commission.

*The Secretary of Interior's Standard for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitation Historic Buildings* recommends in part:

- Identifying, retaining, and preserving masonry features that are important in defining the overall historic character of a building such as walls, brackets, railings, cornices, window architraves, door pediments, steps and columns, and details such as tooling and bonding patterns, coating and color.
- Protecting masonry by providing proper drainage so that water does not stand on flat, horizontal surfaces or accumulate in curved decorative features.
- Cleaning with the gentlest method possible, such as low pressure water, detergent and natural bristle brushed.

*Preservation Briefs #1,2, and 6. (see resources page 18)*



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# WINDOWS AND DOORS

Identifying, retaining, and preserving windows and their functional and decorative features are important in defining the overall historic character of a building. Features such as frames, sashes, muntins, glazing sills, paneled or decorative jambs, moldings, and interior and exterior shutters and blinds add to the definition.

Appearance of the finished window or door is the paramount consideration. Steel, vinyl, aluminum or fiberglass seldom match the appearance of wood, and do not lend themselves to the application of added detailing. Exterior metal, vinyl, or fiberglass shutters, blinds, or awnings which are historically inappropriate will not be approved.



## City of Owosso Historic District Guidelines:

- Windows and doors that contribute to the overall historic character of a building should be retained and repaired as needed, including their overall functional and decorative features, such as frames, sash, muntins, sills, heads, moldings, surrounds, hardware, shutter, glazing, panels, sidelights, fanlights, and thresholds.
- If replacement of an entire window unit is necessary, replace the unit in kind, matching the design, dimension, panels, pane configuration, architectural trim, detail, muntins and material. If the replacement has insulating glass, the appropriate muntin pattern should be permanently applied with muntins not wider than 7/8-inch, as well as with spacer bars internal to the insulated glass. There shall be no flat muntin grids, nor removable muntin grids applied to the inside or outside of the glass panes.
- Replacement windows and doors should fit the opening to the original, and be consistent in glass size and with the existing trim and other features of the building. Transoms and sidelights should be preserved.
- The use of glass block fill in openings is generally not appropriate, unless it was part of the style and period of the structure.
- Installation of metal storm windows and doors which have a painted or baked enamel finish may be approved when they do not alter or destroy the original structure and trim of the opening. Replacement, repair, or installation of wood storm or screen door and which are painted or stained to match the building or trim may also be approved.



The application for window or door replacement should include at a minimum a sketch or depiction of the proposed windows or door detailing a cross section of the existing and proposed dimensions of meeting rails, sash, and muntins.

*Today, any people want to replace historic windows with more energy efficient windows. However, windows are responsible for minor energy loss. Only 10-12% of the total air infiltration is through windows. The cold is actually transferred through the roof, walls, and sill. Properly repaired historic windows can be just as energy efficient, while at the same time preserving historic detail. See resource page 23.*



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# STOREFRONTS

## **STOREFRONTS:**

*the storefront is usually the most prominent feature of a historic commercial building, playing a crucial role in a store's advertising and merchandising strategy. Although a storefront normally does not extend beyond the first story, the rest of the building is often related to it visually through a unity of form and detail. Planning should always consider the entire building; window patterns on the upper floors, cornice elements, and other decorative features should be carefully retained, in addition to the storefront itself.*



The earliest extant storefronts in the U.S., dating from the late 18th and early 19th centuries, had bay or oriel windows and provided limited display space. The 19th century witnessed the progressive enlargement of display windows as pale glass became available in increasingly larger units. The use of cast iron columns and lintels at ground floor level permitted structural members to be reduced in size. Recessed entrances provided shelter for sidewalk patrons and further enlarged display areas. In the 1920s and 1930s, aluminum, colored structural glass, stainless steel, glass block, neon, and other new materials were introduced to create Art Deco storefronts.

## City of Owosso Historic District Guidelines:

Functional and decorative features that are important in defining the overall historic character of a storefront, such as display windows, signs, doors, transoms, kick plates, corner posts, and entablatures should be preserved.

Storefronts should be repaired as needed, which may include replacement in kind or with compatible substitute material of these extensively deteriorated or missing parts of storefronts where there are surviving prototypes such as transoms, kick plates, pilasters or signs.

When a storefront is being built new or extensively renovated the following characteristics of typical storefronts should be considered:

- Roofs are relative flat and never prominent.
- Facades that stretch across more than one business are normally articulated with a strong vertical element at each division space.
- Parapet walls are used on the facade facing the street, and sometimes on other walls.
- Storefront glass is a major element of the main facade of a commercial retail commercial building, taking up most of the length of the facade. The bottom of the glass is normally within 2-feet of the walking surface, and the top at least as high as the top of the door. Glass transom wings are often placed above the windows or doors. The glass should be clear not tinted or mirrored.
- Entries are recessed to create a visual indicator of their importance, and to keep out swing doors from striking pedestrians passing by.
- A two or more story building should have a clear demarcation between stories.
- Canopies or awnings are encouraged, and placed for a comfortable human scale beneath. Fabric awnings may be considered if historically appropriate and compatible with the storefront in scale, form and material. They should be triangular in form, and not back-lit. They should be 7 and 10 feet above the sidewalk and a maximum of 1 foot above the storefront windows (not including transoms).
- Awning should only be attached to wood or mortar joints, not to the masonry.
- Historic or iconic should be preserved.

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# SIGNS AND LIGHTING

***MOST SIGNS AND LIGHTING CAN GENERALLY BE APPROVED ADMINISTRATIVELY - SAVING YOU TIME.***

## **BUILDING MOUNTED SIGNS:**

- A sign should be consistent in size, type, materials, color, and type of supporting device with the architectural characteristics of the building upon which it is placed or within which it is placed for the purpose of being viewed from the exterior.
- A sign should not in any way obstruct or destroy unique architectural features of the building or surrounding buildings. sign attached to masonry should only be attached into the mortar joints and not the masonry or brick.
- The preferred location for the main business sign is flush mounted below the cornice line of a single story building, if the area between the storefront windows and second story windows on a two or more story building. If there is a separate cornice above the storefront, the sign should be on or below the cornice line. Another acceptable for a business sign is on the storefront glass, where painted or stenciled letters may be placed.
- New signs are also regulated by City Ordinance No. 802
- If the Historical District Commission determines that an existing sign is iconic or of historic significance, it should be retained. Its repair or restoration may be allowed whether or not it meets the guidelines in this section, and whether or not it meets the limitations in Ordinance No. 802 on zoning.
- Sign materials which were not used when the structure was built may be permitted contingent upon the durability, permanency, appearance, and appropriateness in relation to the building and the district.
- Flags, banners, and buntings and other hanging objects which are not permanently affixed to the structure do not need approval from the Commission. (A building permit may be required.) Any of the above that becomes unsightly because of deterioration must be removed or replaced.
- Internally lit signs are generally not appropriate, except neon.



## **FREE STANDING SIGNS:**

- The size of free standing signs appropriate for the district are 2-feet by 4-feet sandwich board signs. Other forms of free standing signs are generally not appropriate.

## **LIGHTING:**

- Exterior lighting, including the lighting of signs, should be consistent with the historical period of the structure. The quality and color of the light should be comfortable and subdued and not harsh.
  - The illumination of facades in residential areas with harsh floodlights is not recommended.
  - When possible a historic light fixture should be retained. If fixtures are missing or beyond repair, they may be replaced by reproduction fixtures. Contemporary fixtures that are inconspicuous or that complement the structure may be selected.



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# ADDITIONS/NEW CONSTRUCTION

## **ADDITIONS:**

New additions within the historic district can be appropriate if they do not destroy historic features, materials, and spatial relationships of the original building and site.

The location, size, height, scale, design and materials should be compatible with the original structure. The commission may make recommendations to the Planning Commission and/or Board of Appeals concerning placement of additions on the lot.

A new addition should be designed and located so that significant site features including mature trees are not lost.

New additions should be designed in such a manner as to make clear what is historic and what is new. They should be constructed so that they can be removed in the future without damage to the building.

It is not appropriate to construct an addition that significantly changes the proportion of built mass open space on the individual site.

## **NEW CONSTRUCTION:**

With new structures or renovations which totally change the facade, the appearance of the streetscape as a whole should be respected. Facades for new structures should be compatible with the overall design and appearance for the surrounding streetscape in its design and appearance.

New structures need not replicate existing styles. They may be honest modern or contemporary adaptations or reflections of traditional styles, or they may be totally new, distinctive structures which are nevertheless compatible with the district's character.

Compatibility of siting and massing: the historic relationship between building, landscape features and open space should be retained. The siting should be reviewed based on existing district setbacks, orientation, spacing and the distance between adjacent buildings.

The height and bulk of a new building shall be compatible with its surroundings and shall in no event exceed that of existing buildings in the Historic District.

If there is significant variation in siting or in height or bulk for the immediate surrounding buildings which creates a material adverse impact on the character of that area, the commission may make recommendations to the Planning Commission and/or Board of Appeals concerning height, massing and placement on the lot of the new construction.

In addition to the scale of the structure, details such as roof lines, materials, the size, type, and placement of windows, doors, porches, fences, chimneys, and garages should be considered in assessing compatibility of the new structure with the existing streetscape. Especially in commercial areas, the scale of architectural elements should provide comfortable surroundings for pedestrians. That applies especially to heights of canopies or awnings, and heights of doors and windows.

New buildings should be designed so that they are compatible with, but discernible from adjacent historical buildings.



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# DEMOLITION OR REMOVAL

## **THIS SECTION ONLY APPLIES TO CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES.**

Demolition or removal of structures which are contributing resources in a historic is prohibited.

An exception may be made for the demolition or removal of a resource only through issuance of a “notice to proceed” by the Commission if any of the following conditions prevail:

1. The resource constitutes a hazard to the safety of the public or occupants and if, in the opinion of the Commission, the proposed demolition is the only reasonable way to improve or correct this condition.
2. The resource is a deterrent to a major improvement program which will be of substantial benefit to the community and which outweighs the benefit to the public interest and the general welfare of the citizens of the city derived from the historic, architectural or contextual significance of the structure.
3. Retention of the structure would cause undue financial hardship to the owner, provided that any hardship or difficulty claimed by the owner is not self-created or is not result of failure to maintain the property in good repair, which itself is not the result of financial hardship of the owner. All feasible alternatives to eliminate the financial hardship, which may include offering the property for sale at its fair market value, or moving the resource to a vacant site within a historic district, should have been attempted and exhausted by the owner.
4. Retention of the structure would not be in the best interest of the community.



### **Conditions for Relocation:**

Before permitting relocation of a contributing resource, the Commission should determine whether the structure is threatened with demolition, whether relocation is the only alternative, and whether the structure is sound enough to survive the move.

If it is proposed to relocate a structure in a historic district, the Commission should only permit it if it is determined to be architecturally compatible with the adjacent buildings according to the guidelines for new construction.

With relocation of a structure in a historic district, significant site features of the new context should be protected, and the building should be situated on the site according to the guidelines for new construction.



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# GLOSSARY

**ALTERATION:** work that changes the details of a structure but retains its basic shape or size

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS:** the written approval of a project application for work that is appropriate and that does not adversely affect a structure and consistent with the purposes of this chapter. An applicant will need to have this certificate BEFORE applying for any necessary building permits. A certificate may be approved with specific conditions.

**CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES:** Resources which contribute to the historic character of the district (most of which will be over 50-years old) may be described by:

1. The original design is largely intact, with its original ornament and detail. Maintenance and repair may be needed, but new design work is not necessary; or
2. The original design can be discerned, but some elements have been removed or replaced with later designs. If early photographs or architectural drawings are available, exact reconstruction of missing details will be possible. Otherwise, new but compatible designs may be necessary.

**FALSE HISTORY:** Is to introduce wood or metal details to a historic building in an attempt to create a false history. This practice is to be avoided.

**NEED FOR CHANGES:** To identify and think about how important the proposed adaptations are to continuing the same use, or allowing adaptive reuse.

**NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES:** These are resources that do not contribute because they are:

1. Over 50-years old but the original design has been significantly altered. Even when documentation of the original design and details is available, the Commission must decide if enough remains to justify restoration to the original design. The guidelines for additions and new construction will be applied.
2. Less than 50-years old but are good architectural quality for the period in which they were built, and they have become important parts of the context of the contributing resources in the district. Proposed changes should be judged against the standards of the period of the building. Changes should be consistent with the structure's own style, form, scale, relationship of openings, selection of materials, details and other features.
3. Others less than 50-years old and are of less than exemplary architectural design. The guidelines for additions and new construction will be applied.

**NOTICE TO PROCEED:** Written permission to use a permit for work that is inappropriate and adversely affects a structure.

**ORDINARY MAINTENANCE OR MAINTENANCE:** Keeping a structure unimpaired and in good repair through ongoing minor intervention, undertaken from time to time, in its exterior condition. Ordinary maintenance does not change the external appearance of the structure except through the elimination of the usual and expected effects of weathering. Ordinary maintenance does not constitute "work".

**PRESERVATION:** The act of identifying and giving consideration to the elements and characteristics which are original to the resource, and this that are later but contribute to its history or architectural significance. The act of retaining all features, components, and details. Proper maintenance is key to preservation. Repair is always preferred over replacement.

**REASONABLE:** Technical and economic feasibility are considered, but preservation remains the goal.

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# GLOSSARY CONT.

**REPAIR:** To restore a damaged or decayed resource to good and sound condition by any process. A repair that changes the external appearance of a resource constitutes “work”.

**STRUCTURE:** Any human-made structure including commercial structures, houses, garages, carriage barns, storage sheds.

**WORK:** Means construction, addition, alteration, repair, moving, excavation or demolition.

• *Work: Without Review:*

- Minor repairs, color schemes, roof color, flags and banners (may require a building permit), repairs to awnings and shutters with like material/appearance, rain gutters, repairs to retaining walls, and normal routine maintenance.

• *Work: Administrative approvals are done by staff in the office and include:*

- *Replacement of signage* provided that: 1) the new sign fits within an existing frame or replaces a sign in the exact location and with the same size, lighting, and material of the existing sign or 2) that the sign fits within the existing sign panel provided that the materials do not detract from historic features and that the signage is generally congruous with adjacent signage.
- *Replacement of the fabric of existing canvas awnings* provided that the new canvas is not plastic or vinyl coated and does not appear to be so.
- *Replacement of existing fencing* provided that: 1) the fence is in the same location and is composed of the same or more historically appropriate material; 2) the fence is the same height; and 3) it is a chain link, wrought iron, or flat board fence. Chain link or metal security type fences may not be installed in the front open space or within the side open space on the street side of corner lots.
- *Installation of glass blocks to replace basement windows* provided that: 1) the glass block is recessed in the opening to the location of the existing window; 2) screening or grates are installed on the exterior to cover the glass block; 3) the windows are no larger than 36” wide and 24” high; and 4) the windows are located on the sides and rear of the property.
- *Removal of dead, diseased, hazardous or damaged trees* provided that: a written statement by a professional is provided documenting the condition and that the trees are not savable, or it is an emergency situation as determined by the building official.
- *Replacement of gutters and downspouts* provided that: the size, materials, configuration, and placement match the existing.
- *Replacement of roofs* provided that: the materials, color, and roofline match the existing.
- *Replacement of existing windows* that are deteriorated beyond repair and that match the existing in size, type, location, material and muntin pattern; bare metal finishes (except for aluminum cladding), Low “E” reflective or tinted glazing are not permitted unless they match the existing.
- *Installation of new storm windows and storm doors* that match the opening size and are not bare metal; that mullions and meeting rails of storm windows match the prime windows; and the design of the storm door is similar in style to the prime door.
- *Replacement of non-original windows or doors*; or windows or doors in non-contributing resources; with new windows or doors that are an accurate restoration using historical, pictorial, and physical documentation, or a new design that is compatible with the openings and historic character of the building.

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## GLOSSARY CONT.

- *Installation of new skylights* or solar panels on non-character defining roof surfaces not visible from the street provided the skylights are flat, do not extend more than 8 inches above the roof surface, are similar to the color of the roof material and cover not more than 10% of the roof surface on which they are located; bare metal finishes, bubble or domed skylights are permitted only on flat or rear-facing roofs.
- *Installation of new wood clapboard siding* or artificial siding that replicates clapboard where the existing siding is artificial and provided the exposed vertical dimension of the new “clapboard” is no more than five inches or within one inch of the missing or covered original; no new material may cover nor require the removal of any original trim or architectural detail such as ornamental shingles, carved brackets, window hoods and the like.
- *Removal of artificial siding* to repair and restore original siding.
- *Cleaning of masonry* provided the application meets the requirements in Preservation Briefs 1: Assessing Cleaning and Water-Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings and Preservation Briefs 6: Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings. Sandblasting or the use of any other abrasive processes is strictly prohibited in the district.
- *Reconstruction of masonry* to exactly match the existing in color, size, texture, coursing, mortar profile, color, composition, and joint width.
- *The installation of satellite dishes* or antenna, provided the location is not visible from the street or sidewalk in the front, or if a corner lot, the street or sidewalk on the side.
- *Installation of new handrails* that match the existing balustrade may be added to porch steps, or the replacement of non-original handrails with replicas of documented original handrails, or new compatible handrails.
- *Re-construction of existing fire escapes* in a matching or smaller size.
- *The replacement of existing on-grade walkways, stairways, retaining walls and driveways* in the same location in matching or compatible materials.
- *Replacement of concrete basement walls* provided that the exterior of the portions of the walls above grade are finished in a material matching the original or with a smooth parge coat.
- *Window and door boarding* provided that the boarding-up is temporary and for the protection of the building; and the boarding is painted to look like windows or a dark color such as black or brown. Boarding used for ventilation techniques allowing air flow into the building should be similarly painted a dark color.
- *Reconstruction of existing historic porches* or porch elements provided the materials and design exactly match the existing materials and design.
- *Reconstruction of existing non-historic porches* to match the existing design or the historic design that is documented using historical, pictorial, or physical documentation, or a new design that is compatible with the historic character of the building.
- *Replacement of non-original garage doors and overhead doors* with new doors that are compatible with the design of the garage and/or structure and are located within the existing or historic opening.
- *Installation of air conditioning or mechanical equipment* provided that the equipment is not visible from the street or sidewalk and does not destroy historic features.

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## GLOSSARY CONT.

- *Replacement of internal and external lighting on signs*, provided the replacement matches the same in materials, intensity, placement, and configuration.
- *The replacement of existing decks* in the same location in a matching or smaller size; or the expansion of decks on non-contributing resources provided the expansion does not negatively impact historic resources.
- *The replacement of existing public or other right-of-way features* such as signs, planters, lighting and other objects in the same general location and in matching or improved materials and configuration.
- *The addition of permanent or temporary public or other right-of-way features* such as signs, construction materials, lighting, barricades, and other objects that are required in relation to a public works project, a traffic control order, or other public need.
- *Removal of materials that are not historic in nature* such as awnings, signs, etc.
- Work: Reviewed by the Historic District Commission:
  - New construction and additions, changes to windows or siding, brick repair/replacement. alterations and/or removal of any archeological significant features, and any other work not exempt from review.





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# THE COMMISSION AND MEETINGS

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**APPLICATIONS ARE REVIEWED INDIVIDUALLY DURING A PUBLIC MEETING.**

***EACH PROPERTY, EACH SETTING, EACH SITUATION IS UNIQUE.***

1. The staff liaison for the Historic District Commission presents basic information about the project. A meeting packet with all supporting documentation is emailed in advance to the commissioners and to the applicant.
2. The applicant or their representative is invited to address the Commission by describing the



project in detail. The commissioners will have questions for the applicant and owner. A discussion then takes place with the commissioners who question the staff and the applicant. *This discussion can be spirited to make sure that everybody understands exactly what is proposed, why it is important, and the the standards are properly applied. Please expect the commissioners to ask about alternative to your proposal.*

3. At this point the meeting is closed to discussion and the commission begins deliberation. A commissioner will propose a motion.

4. Further discussion may continue and eventually a vote is taken. A motion requires a quorum of the appointed members (four or more) to pass. A quorum of members present is sufficient for administrative decisions.

5. If the application is approved or approved with conditions, the applicant will receive a Certificate of Appropriateness within ten days.

6. A decision on the application may be postponed for more information. The letter to the applicant will specify the additional materials or information required before the Commission will place the application back on the agenda.

If the application is denied, the applicable Secretary of Interior's Standard is cited. In the letter of denial, the applicant will receive information on alternate work plans for the project, which may be acceptable to the Commission. The letter will also be included information on how the denial can be appealed to the State Historic Preservation Review Board as required by city ordinance and PA 169.



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# LINK AND RESOURCES

**PRESERVATION BRIEFS:** a series of easy to read guides on preserving, rehabilitating, and restoring historic buildings. See all 47 at: [www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm](http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm)

**MICHIGAN HISTORIC PRESERVATION NETWORK:** has tons of links and information at: [www.mhpn.org](http://www.mhpn.org)

**THE SECRETARY OF INTERIOR’S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION:** link to documentation at: <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/treatment-guidelines-2017.pdf>



# OWOSSO DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

