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PLYMOUTH DOWNTOWN DESIGN STRATEGY

Draft: November 2022

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Prepared for: The City of Plymouth and Plymouth's Downtown Design Ad-Hoc Committee

Prepared by: Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission



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OVERVIEW	
DOWNTOWN DESIGN STRATEGY	6
The Downtown Planning Area	7
Project Objectives	7
Planning Approach	7
Who must comply with the design standards and guidelines?	7
What exactly do the design guidelines address?	7
Committee Recommendations	8
Adopt Standards and Guidelines in a New Downtown Design Overlay Zoning District	10
Formation of an Architectural Design Sub-Committee	36
Hire an Economic Development Director at the City of Plymouth.	39
Improve the City of Plymouth’s facade and signage grant program	41
Evaluate the installation of placemaking elements to improve the look and appeal of the downtown area	42
Support the formation of a steering committee to explore the establishment of a downtown business improvement district.	45
Summary of Project Appendices	46
Appendix A: Existing Conditions	46
Appendix B: Case Study Evaluation	46
Appendix C: Funding Options Matrix	46

OVERVIEW

DOWNTOWN DESIGN STRATEGY

Over the last several decades, the City of Plymouth and the Plymouth community have launched and implemented multiple efforts to improve the look and feel of their downtown. To build from past work, the City of Plymouth contracted the Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission (BLRPC), in cooperation with Plymouth's Downtown Design Ad-Hoc Committee, to identify ways to beautify its downtown.

The downtown design project is intended to help decision makers identify code amendments, policies, and programs to implement to ensure private development and redevelopment supports the community's vision for the downtown area. This document encourages creativity and high-quality urban design while allowing for flexibility in standards. The Plymouth Common Council has authorized this strategy as a major implementation tool. This project builds on past work including Plymouth's 2002 Downtown Revitalization Master Plan and 2013 Downtown Design Guidelines.

Exhibit 1: Plymouth's Downtown Planning Area Overlay Zoning District



The Downtown Planning Area

This project addresses Plymouth's downtown planning area specifically. Plymouth's downtown is centrally located in the community. It includes properties along E Main Street on the north, Collins Street on the south, Mill Pond on the east, and Spring Street/Milwaukee Street on the west (see Exhibit 1). The Mullet River meanders through the southern portion of the planning area from Mill Pond and out beyond Milwaukee Street.

Project Objectives

Overall, this document intends to:

- Promote economic development of Plymouth's commercial core.
- Provide clear objectives for those embarking on the planning and design of development projects within downtown Plymouth;
- Promote original and high quality design;
- Promote building and site design that fits into the context of Plymouth's downtown;
- Protect the historic character and value of the downtown core. This includes respecting the existing architectural, historic, and cultural features of the planning area.
- Promote sustainable design principles;
- Increase the awareness of design considerations amongst the citizens and businesses of Plymouth; and
- Enhance the character and function of Plymouth's downtown streets;
- Promote compact, walkable development patterns;
- Maintain and enhance property values within downtown Plymouth.

Who must comply with the design standards and guidelines?

New non-residential and multifamily development, and non-residential building additions, remodels, redevelopments, and site improvements located in Plymouth's Downtown Planning Area Overlay District. (Exhibit 1)

New and existing single-family residential developments do not need to comply with the standards and guidelines detailed in this document.

Planning Approach

In 2021, the City of Plymouth formed a downtown design Ad-Hoc Committee and contracted the BLRPC to identify and evaluate protocols, programs, and actions to support the look and feel of downtown Plymouth and to ensure it continues to flourish aesthetically, economically, and culturally.

The project was anticipated to result in a set of recommendations that the City of Plymouth (and its partners) can implement over the next several years.

The process to establish recommendations (which are outlined in the next chapter) relied on the following steps:

1. Evaluate existing conditions of the downtown planning area via field visits and discussions with Ad-Hoc Committee members and City staff.
2. Analyze community needs and desires, via review of past planning efforts, discussions with Ad-Hoc Committee members, and input received through a stakeholder open house.
3. Evaluate 22 successful downtown communities (i.e., case studies research).

The details and results of these steps are documented in several appendices that support this strategy.

What exactly do the design guidelines address?

While the zoning code addresses the types of land uses that are allowed in particular areas and the intensity of development, the design guidelines will address the following elements for improvements in the Downtown Planning Area:

- Site design elements (internal open space, service areas, pedestrian amenities, etc.)
- Building design (character, scale, details, and materials)
- Internal circulation (walkways, internal drives, etc.)

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

This section lists and describes recommendations of this project. The planning team established these recommendations following a review of past planning efforts in Plymouth, a review of downtown revitalization best practices, and an evaluation of initiatives and projects administered in communities with successful downtowns. The next chapter will identify steps to implement each recommendation.

- **Adopt standards and guidelines in a new downtown design overlay zoning district.**

In 2013, the City of Plymouth worked with an architectural design firm to establish design guidelines for downtown Plymouth. Since then, the City's Redevelopment Authority have tried to encourage get property owners to follow and integrate these guidelines when renovating their buildings. However, the 2013 guidelines lack the necessary authority to be enforced. This opens up opportunities for poor design. Because the visual character is one of the core pillars propping up downtown Plymouth's quality of life, the City's Ad-Hoc Committee recommends that the City of Plymouth codify design standards, as part of a downtown overlay district, to ensure the appearance and identity of Plymouth's downtown planning area achieves the community's vision for downtown.

An overlay district (standing in contrast to guidelines) is a regulatory tool that creates a special zoning district over one or more existing (base) zoning districts. A design overlay district, in particular, will regulate building design elements, such as storefront facades, building materials and colors, and display windows. This document provides more information about the specific design standards proposed for the Downtown Design Overlay Zoning District.

- **Form an architectural design sub-committee of the Redevelopment Authority.**

Formation of an architectural design sub-committee of the Redevelopment Authority is proposed, if the City of Plymouth implements the downtown design overlay district. The City will need a review body with the technical expertise to evaluate permit applications to determine the extent to which they comply with the requirements and intent of the downtown design standards. The sub-committee is suggested to be a small group, comprised of at least one member with subject-matter expertise (e.g., an architect or urban designer).

The sub-committee could also offer design assistance and property improvement recommendations that coincide with Plymouth's downtown design standards.

- **Hire an Economic Development Director at the City of Plymouth.**

This strategy recommends that the City of Plymouth hire an Economic Development Director to help implement the recommendations set forth in this plan. This position is envisioned to work with downtown property owners to address economic development barriers and discuss funding opportunities, promote tourism and visitor spending, and support continued revitalization of the downtown area. An Economic Development Director could also help to establish and steer other city-wide economic development initiatives and projects.

- **Improve the City of Plymouth’s facade and signage grant program.**

Update the existing grant form, including the contact information. Update the program parameters and include important contextual information about the program. For example, reference the design standards that applicants must adhere to as a condition for receiving grant money. Identify improvements that are ineligible, potentially eligible, and not eligible. Increase the maximum grant amount that can be awarded (and the extent to which award caps vary by improvement type) – this will likely require the City to identify an effective, ongoing funding stream to support this program. Finally, consider modifying the Facade Improvement Grant to the Exterior Improvement Grant (to allow rear and side building improvements to potentially be funded too).

Once improvements to the program have been implemented, the City should improve how the the grant program is promoted (e.g., via continuous, direct outreach).

- **Evaluate the installation of placemaking elements to improve the look and appeal of the downtown area.**

The purpose of this recommendation is to transform spaces, often overlooked, into well-designed places for people to congregate. It will likely require the development of one or more programs to establish the parameters that property or business owners may follow prior to implementing placemaking projects on portions of City-owned rights-of-way (e.g., on-street parking stalls and alleyways). Placemaking program ideas, as discussed by the Ad-Hoc Committee, include a parklet program and an alleyway improvement program.

A parklet is a sidewalk extension onto one or more on-street parking stalls. The extension provides more space and amenities for people using the street. Parklets are typically used for passive recreation, public seating, and/or outdoor dining. An alleyway improvement program could serve in a similar capacity by providing space for public art, outdoor dining, etc.

- **Support the formation of a steering committee to explore the establishment of a downtown business improvement district.**

A business improvement district (BID) is a special assessment district, authorized under state law. It is a defined commercial and/or industrial area, governed by a board of directors. When a BID is formed, property owners inside the BID are assessed an additional property tax to pay for specific projects and services that improve and market the area. A BID for the downtown area can provide the funding mechanism and operational structure to enhance Plymouth’s commercial core.

The City of Plymouth should support the formation of a steering committee to evaluate the extent to which it makes sense for the City to initiate the formation of a downtown BID. The steering committee should include representatives from different downtown business and property owners, representatives from the City of Plymouth and the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce, and representatives from Plymouth’s Downtown Arts and Merchants group.

Adopt Standards and Guidelines in a New Downtown Design Overlay Zoning District

The City of Plymouth contracted the Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission (BLRPC) to establish downtown design standards and guidelines (recommendations), in cooperation with the City of Plymouth’s Downtown Design Ad-Hoc Committee. This sections presents design standard recommendations for Plymouth’s downtown. They are based off Plymouth’s 2013 Downtown Design Guidelines, developed by Pfaller Architectural Associates, Inc. for the Plymouth Redevelopment Authority.

The City of Plymouth’s Downtown Design Ad-Hoc Committee recommends that the proposed standards, organized on the following pages, be codified in the City’s Zoning Ordinance (Title 13 of Plymouth’s Municipal Code) as an overlay district for the downtown planning area.

How do the Design Standards and Guidelines Apply to My Development?

First – the standards and guidelines herein apply to all new non-residential and multifamily development and non-residential additions, remodels, redevelopments, and site improvements associated with them within the Plymouth Downtown Planning Area defined in Exhibit 1.

New and existing single-family residential developments do not need to comply with the standards and guidelines detailed in this document.

Second, review the provisions of section, which apply to all new and improved development unless otherwise noted. Also, note that some provisions may only apply to particular types of uses or developments.

Maintenance of applicable properties in the Downtown Design Overlay Zoning District is subject to Plymouth’s building code and zoning code.

***Property Maintenance:** the preservation of an asset, or of a condition of property, by upkeep and necessary repairs.*

Plymouth’s downtown area maintains an additional set of standards to ensure ordinary property maintenance in the Downtown Design Overlay Zoning District is conducted in a manner that continues to enhance the area’s streetscape and historic character. Ordinary property maintenance includes painting, decorating, the repair/replacement of original doors and windows, and repairs to other nonstructural components.

Maintenance of properties in the Downtown Design Overlay Zoning District are subject to the “fast track” review process. (see Exhibit 3)

Standards and Guidelines - What Do They Mean?

This document was crafted to provide clear minimum design standards, while integrating necessary provisions that allow some flexibility. Below is a description of key components of this document:

Description statements – are overarching objectives associated with a particular set of standards/ guidelines. An example of an description statement is: “To encourage the incorporation of design details and small-scale elements into building facades that are attractive at a pedestrian scale”.

Standards – are required provisions. They feature language such as “shall”, “must”, “is/are required”, or “is/are prohibited”. Some standards feature a number of different ways to meet the code. While most standards are easily quantifiable, there are some standards that provide a level of discretion in how they are complied with. In the latter case, the applicant must demonstrate in writing how the project meets the intent of the standard(s)

Guidelines – are voluntary provisions. They feature language such as “should”, “is/are recommended”, or “is/are encouraged”. Provision – is simply the term that refers to the specific standard or guideline number in this document. It may also refer to standards and guidelines in a general sense.

Departures – are provisions that allow an applicant to propose an alternative means of compliance with a specific standard on a voluntary basis, provided they meet the “intent” of the standard (departures are not variances). Specific departures often come with additional criteria to aid applicants in designing projects and ultimately helping the reviewing authority make decisions on them.

Also, graphics are utilized throughout this document to help clarify several of the written standards/guidelines.

What’s the Relationship to Plymouth Code of Ordinances & Downtown Design Strategy?

The design standards and guidelines herein are intended to supplement the Title 13 of the Plymouth Code of Ordinances. Whereas the zoning provisions in Title 13 address land use, density, and certain dimensional standards, the provisions herein largely focus on site and building design issues. Where there is a conflict between the provisions herein and Title 13, the zoning ordinance shall apply.

How Does the Downtown Design Review Process Work?

When a project is subject to the design review process, a property owner, architect or contractor submits a design review application. The city staff and Architectural Design Sub-Committee (ADC) then use the guidelines to inform the subsequent design review process.

The following charts identify the steps involved in reviewing and approving an application for design review. The charts are intended to assist applicants in preparing application materials at the appropriate level of detail in the course of the project and in establishing a project schedule.

* **Approvals:** The Zoning Administrator will issue a Certificate of Compliance for a successful downtown design review application. A Certificate of Compliance is necessary as part of the zoning permit process.

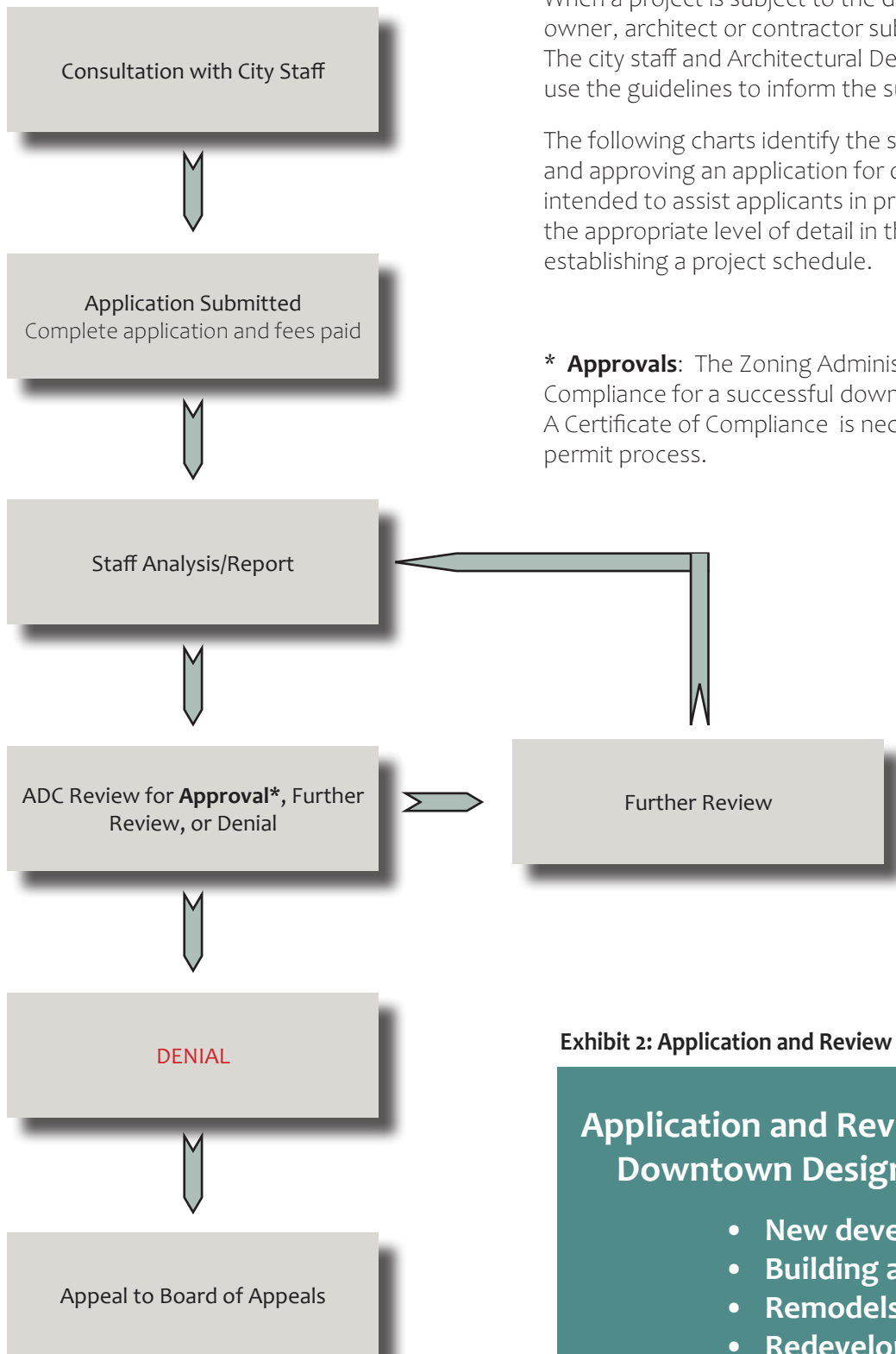


Exhibit 2: Application and Review Process

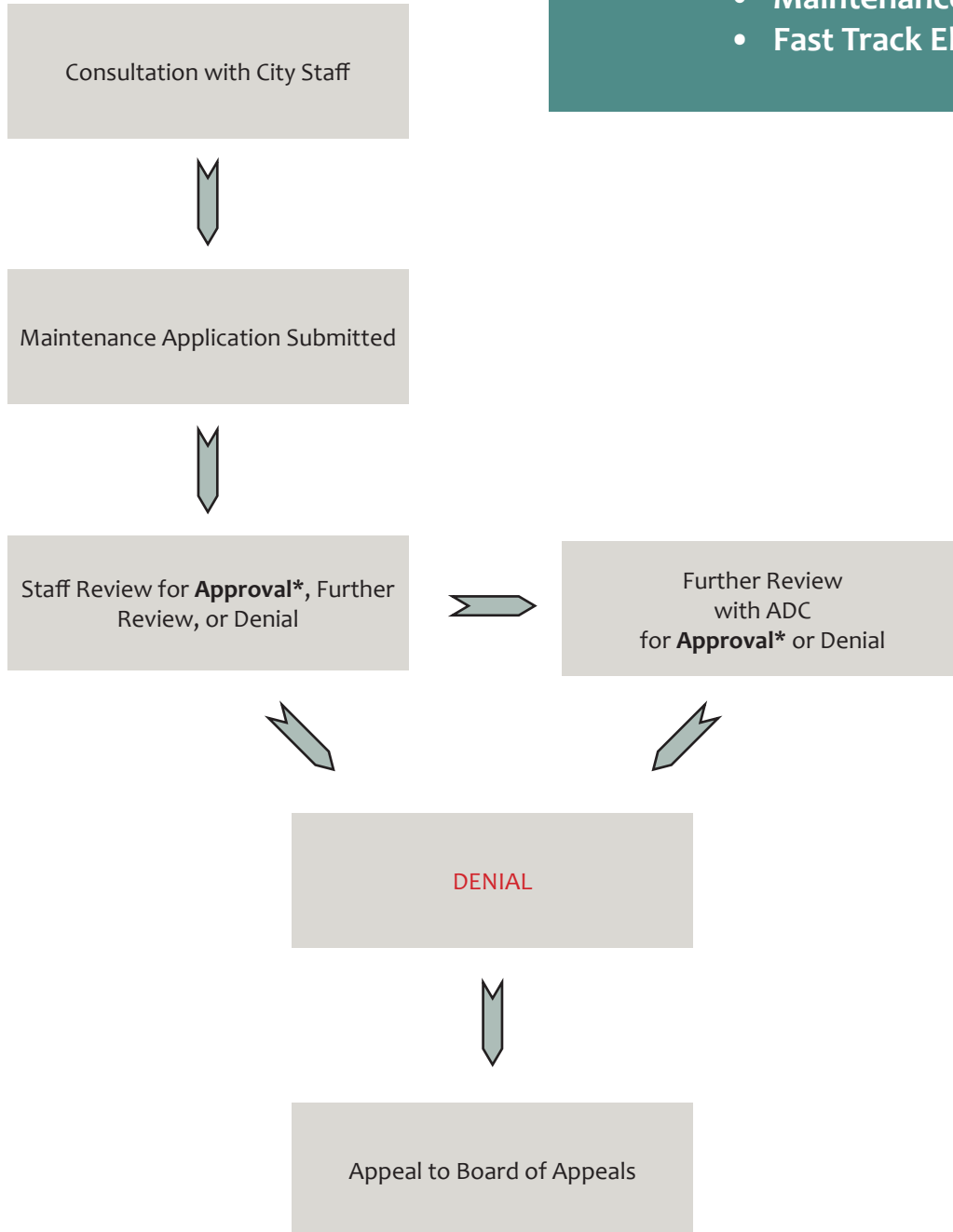
Application and Review Process for the Downtown Design Overlay District

- New development
- Building additions
- Remodels
- Redevelopments
- Site Improvements

Exhibit 3: "Fast Track" Application and Review Process

Application and Review Process for the Downtown Design Overlay District

- Maintenance
- Fast Track Elements



The Design Standards and Guidelines

The following pages organize the proposed design standard recommendations by design element. Each element is listed in a table of contents on the next page. To orient the reader, the standards were established with the following ideas in mind:

- There are 14 design elements. Each element “must” or a “may” be included in a building permit application. If the element is designated with “must,” the property owner will need to adhere to the corresponding design standards for that element (unless a variance is granted). If the element is designated with “may,” the property owner can decide to incorporate the design element. If they must, or choose, to incorporate the design element, they must adhere to the corresponding design standards for that element (unless a variance is granted).
- Standards which are documented in normal, black text are “required.” These standards must be met unless a variance is granted.
- Standards which are *italicized, and blue* are “required, if practical.” As part of a discretionary process, the RDA will work with the applicant and determine whether a proposed project must include the requirement. Among other factors, their determination shall consider building and site layout, materials, historic character, building and site conditions, and costs.
- Some elements are designated as “fast track”. This means the design element’s review process is expeditious or is property maintenance-related (see Exhibit 3).

Contents: Downtown Design Standard Recommendations

1. Awnings and Canopies
2. Materials and Colors
3. Windows and Display Windows
4. Storefront Façade
5. New Infill Building
6. Rear Façade
7. Decks, Patios, and Porches
8. Signs
9. Lighting
10. Roof Form
11. Outdoor Dining
12. Fencing and Retaining Walls
13. Mechanical Equipment, Loading Docks, and Refuse Container Concealment
14. River Orientation/Riverwalk



1. Awnings and Canopies		
Applicability:	This element <input type="checkbox"/> must be included in project. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> may	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fast Track
Description:	Awnings and canopies are purposed to provide shade and cover from poor weather. From a design perspective, they can soften a rigid streetscape, add color, and act as a transition between the upper and lower façade of a building.	
Standards:	<p>Awnings and canopies must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Reinforce the frame of the storefront opening, be attached below the storefront cornice or sign panel, and not cover the piers on either side of the storefront. The awnings valance, or skirt, shall be proportional to the size of the awnings, but shall not exceed twelve (12) inches in height. 1.2. Extend well out over the sidewalk, and not be a mere window dressing. The width of awnings should fit the geometry of the building facade. 1.3. Not extend across multiple storefronts of different buildings. They must reflect the window or door openings below. 1.4. Be fixed and round-headed only if windows or doors are arched, if placed below or within the arched lintel, and if desired by the property owner. 1.5. Be loose and flowing, not stretched tight. Fixed awnings must incorporate a “free” valance that allows movement with the wind. 1.6. Use water-repellent or vinyl-coated canvas. Plastic or aluminum awnings or canopies are not permitted. (Note: the traditional commercial awning material is canvas, and its profile is the watershed design). 1.7. Use plain or striped fabrics in a color compatible with building. 1.8. Be replaced when faded or ripped. 1.9. <i>Include signing only (in place of other sign types) on the end panel or front valance, if desired by the property owner. If signing is used on the valance the lettering size must comply with the city’s Sign Ordinance.</i> 	

2. Materials and Colors

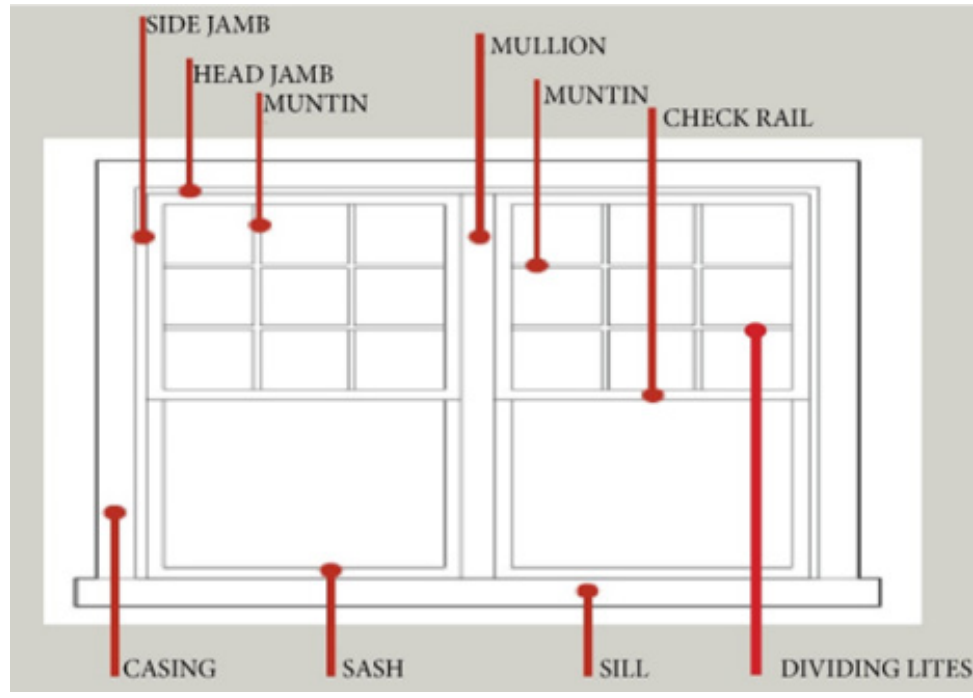
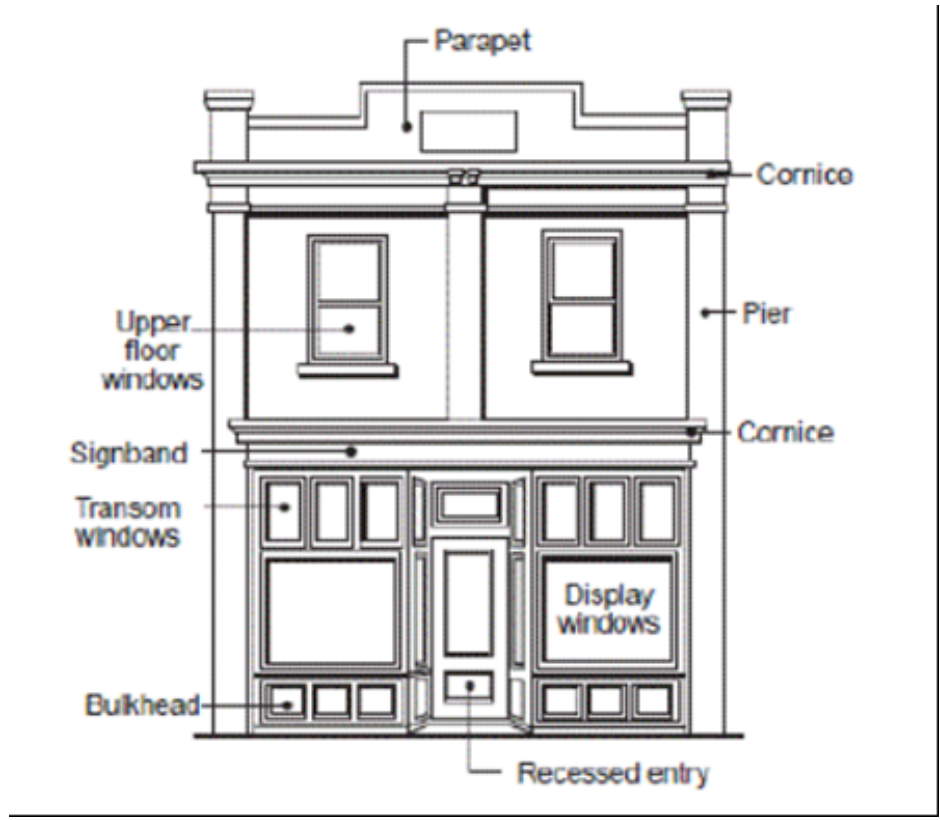
Applicability:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> must <input type="checkbox"/> may	be included in project. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fast Track
Description:	Building materials and colors can add variety, visual interest, and a common theme to facades and districts.	
Standards:	<p>Building materials must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Be similar to the original facade if not already altered in the past. 2.2 Perform their intended function well and be consistently used throughout the design. 2.3 Building additions must complement the existing structure in form, material use, architectural detail, and color. 2.4. Adhere to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.4.1. Concrete block (smooth or decorative split-face), stucco (smooth or textured synthetic), metal, plywood, sheet pressboard, unfinished precast concrete, or poured-in-place concrete shall not be used on building facades or on walls that are visible from streets, driveways, sidewalks, and/or parking areas. 2.4.2. Masonry facades should not be painted nor have sealants applied. If you have a masonry facade that is already painted and the paint seems to be holding, paint it again using colors that are within the natural color range of the material. 2.4.3. Aluminum or vinyl siding is prohibited unless approved by the Architectural Review Committee. 2.4.4. Plaster, stucco, and other exterior insulation finishing system (EIFS) should be used as a secondary material only, comprising no more than 49% of a single facade. 2.4.5. Half timbering is restricted for use only on architecturally appropriate structures. 2.4.6. Pressure treated wood is restricted for use as porch supports, decking, columns, balustrades, and railings. 2.4.7. Any use of this material on a primary facade must have a painted or stained finish. Metals will have an anodized, painted, or powder coated finish. Finishes should be smooth; not to resemble “cake icing”. The exposed lap heights should be limited to a range from three (3) to six (6) inches. 2.4.8. Inappropriate materials include cultured stone, fake or faux brick, rough textured wood siding, wooden shingles, mansard roofs, gravel aggregate materials, and stucco (EIFS) materials. 2.4.9. Engineered wood products are permitted as part of a façade change. 2.4.10. When transitions in materials are made, different materials should meet only at a change in plane, for instance, an inside corner. 	

	<p>2.4.11 Materials will not transition directly at an outside corner edge. One material will turn the corner and carry over to the side elevation to a point at which the corner looks solidly finished.</p> <p>2.4.12. <i>Wood, brick, stone, stucco accents, and glass are the preferred primary building materials for all structures in the district. They should be used on all facades, fronts, sides, and rears of buildings that are visible from streets and parking areas.</i></p> <p>2.4.13. <i>Modular brick is an acceptable material for all building types.</i></p> <p>2.4.14. <i>Oversized or large size bricks may only be used as an accent.</i></p> <p>2.4.15. <i>Adding detail using decorative banding and color or texture transitions is encouraged.</i></p> <p>2.4.16. <i>Cement board siding is acceptable if it maintains the characteristics of traditional clapboard siding.</i></p> <p>2.4.17. <i>The general use of clapboard siding is encouraged.</i></p> <p>2.4.18. <i>The use of ornamental metals as accent material is encouraged.</i></p> <p>2.4.19. <i>Metals may be used for gutters, downspouts, railings, trim, grills, panels, flashing, etc. when appropriate to the architectural style of the building.</i></p> <p>2.4.20. <i>The use of unfinished, exposed metals is discouraged, unless it is compatible with the overall design of the building.</i></p> <p>2.4.21. <i>Pre-cast concrete and cast stone are acceptable if they embody the characteristics of natural stone.</i></p> <p>2.4.22. <i>Natural stone is encouraged.</i></p> <p>2.4.23. <i>The use of wood shingle siding as an accent in dormers and gables as well as a wall finish is encouraged if compatible with the overall design of the building.</i></p> <p>2.4.24. <i>Cement board shingles are acceptable if they embody the characteristics of natural wood shingles.</i></p> <p>2.4.25. <i>Corner trim pieces, such as corner boards on clapboard siding, may be used where appropriate.</i></p> <p>Building colors must:</p> <p>2.5. Be neutral and natural (earth tones) where possible, with contrasting colors acceptable for secondary or accent colors.</p> <p>2.6. Not be primary, bright, or excessively brilliant, unless used sparingly for subtle trim accents. Day-glow or fluorescent colors are prohibited.</p> <p>2.7. Be compatible for shops that occupy multiple-storefront buildings. The use of different colors to identify individual shops within a single structure is visually disruptive and obscures the overall composition of the facade.</p>
	<p>2.8. <i>Be sensitive to the period the building was built, the architectural style, materials, and relationship to other buildings. Building color shall be compatible with the area's character and enhance the buildings visual appeal. To determine a color</i></p>
	<p>2.9. <i>Colors should accentuate the architectural details of the building.</i></p>

3. Windows and Display Windows

Applicability:	This Element <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> must be included in project. <input type="checkbox"/> may	<input type="checkbox"/> Fast Track
Description:	Windows are one of the most prominent and important features of storefronts. Good windows help to conserve energy, improve indoor light quality, and improve aesthetics of storefront facades. Exhibit 4 presents some examples of window types and key terms.	
Standards:	<p>Windows must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1. Satisfy the Wisconsin State Building Code and regulations as determined by the City of Plymouth. 3.2. (When completely replaced) contain the same proportions as the original. Consider the horizontal and vertical mullions that provide design continuity throughout the building. Always use the entire original window opening, even if the opening was partially filled in from previous remodeling. 3.3. <i>(If original units are repaired) install custom fabricated storm units to eliminate front and moisture penetration.</i> <p>Commercial Display Windows (in particular) must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.4. Be transparent. A minimum of sixty (60) percent of the street level facade shall be transparent and thirty (30) percent on rear facades. A minimum of two (2) feet shall be maintained between the glass and any interior dividers to allow for product display. 3.5. (For infill buildings) use window frames made of wood, or appropriately colored aluminum or vinyl clad. 3.6. Not include reflective glass. 3.7. Not include mirrored or heavily tinted glass on the first floor or street level because it conveys a conflicting modern design feeling. It also creates a blank wall effect, which may be offensive to the pedestrian. 3.8. <i>(For remodeling purposes) preserve the original size, division, and shape of display windows within the overall storefront frame.</i> 3.9. <i>Include window detailing such as mutton or mullions (see Exhibit 4). They may be true divided light or simulated divided light.</i> 	

Exhibit 4. Window Types and Key Terms



Source: (Top image) Strathcona Area Redevelopment Plan, accessed via <https://webdocs.edmonton.ca/zoningbylaw/DC1/Strathcona/Commercial.htm>.
 (Bottom image) Burlington-wi.gov, accessed via: <https://www.burlington-wi.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1740/HPC-Facade-Grant--COA-Application-2020-filable?bidId=>.

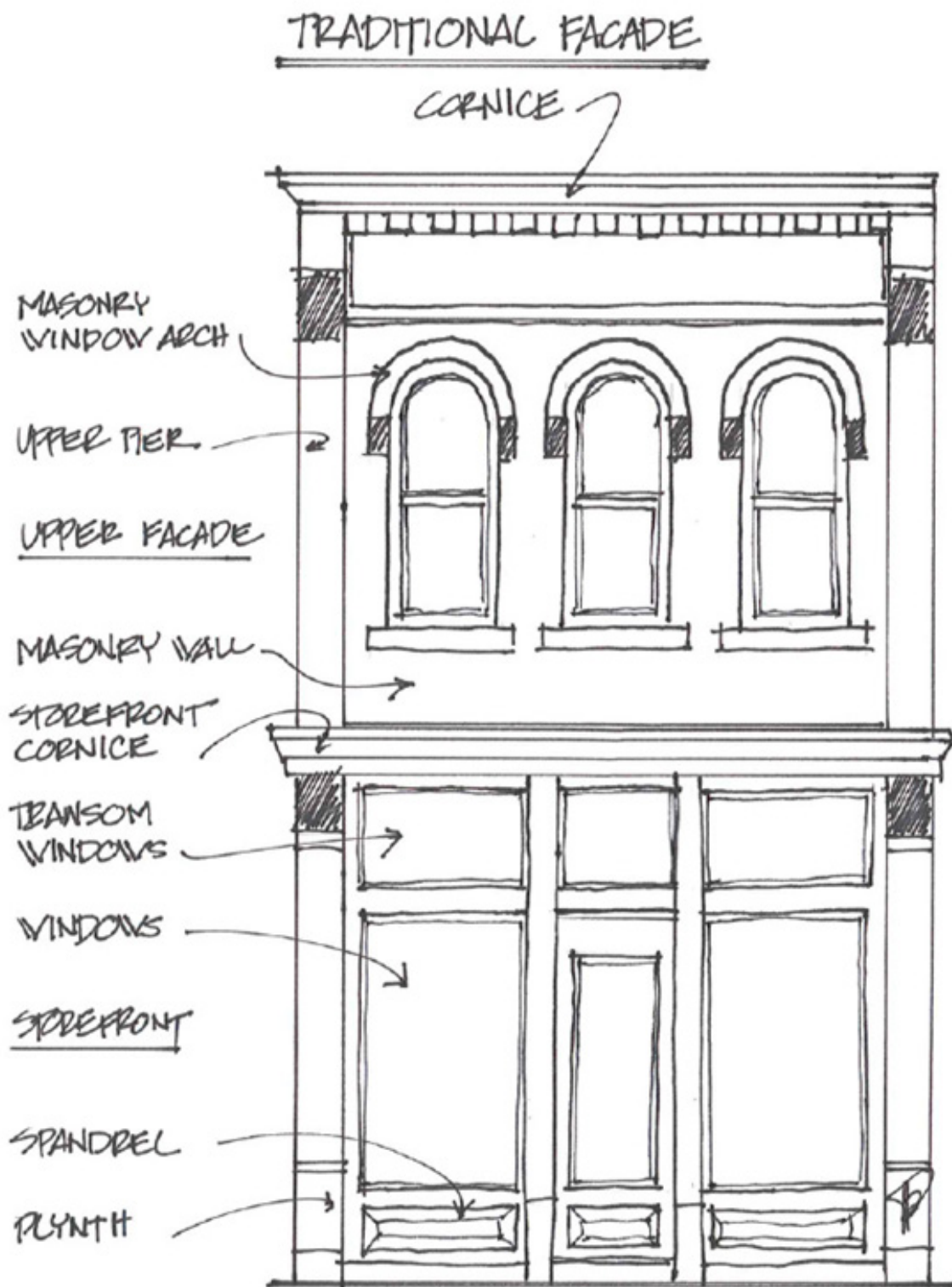
4. Storefront Façade		
Applicability:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> must <input type="checkbox"/> may	This Element be included in project. <input type="checkbox"/> Fast Track
Description:	A storefront façade is located on the ground floor or street level of a commercial building and typically includes display windows. See Exhibit 5 for an illustration of the core components of a traditional façade.	
Standards:	<p>Storefront façades must:</p> <p>4.1. Include large windows with thin framing members, a recessed entrance with overhead transom, a storefront cornice, an exposed structural element, or a horizontal sign panel at the top of the storefront to separate it from the upper facade, and low bulkheads at the base to protect the windows and act as a platform for window displays. The basic configuration can be constructed from traditional or contemporary materials, achieving the same results.</p> <p>4.2. Include windows and door openings sized and proportioned similar to those on the adjacent facades.</p> <p>4.3. Include the kick plate, or bulkhead, functions to protect the display window by raising the glass area to a safer and more easily viewed height. Historically, materials have included wood panels, stone, brick, and ceramic tile. The original kick plate materials should always be retained, maintained, or uncovered when possible.</p> <p>4.4. Retain openings containing double entry doors.</p> <p>4.5. <i>Avoid infill panels when providing new windows in existing masonry opening.</i></p> <p>4.6. <i>Avoid concealing the original façade and restore storefront facade to its original character, if applicable.</i></p> <p>4.7. <i>Retain transom windows whenever possible. Transom windows that are covered or blocked should be reopened and restored. If the ceiling inside the store has been lowered, the ceiling could slope up to two (2) to three (3) feet back to meet the transom, or dark painted panels can be placed behind transom windows to help simulate transparency and depth.</i></p> <p>4.8. <i>Use large commercial entry doors with glass panels with vertical proportions to aid a sense of invitation and openness to the business. Avoid solid or residential-type doors with small areas of glass.</i></p> <p>4.9. <i>Light awnings from above, if applicable, and/or may feature lighting beneath to illuminate the sidewalk, however glowing awnings (backlit, light shows through the material) are prohibited.</i></p> <p>4.10. <i>Always try to utilize existing materials. Examples of materials according to location:</i></p> <p>4.10.1. <i>Storefront framework: cast iron, anodized aluminum</i></p> <p>4.10.2. <i>Display windows: clear glass</i></p>	

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- 4.10.3. *Transom windows: clear, tinted, stained, or etched glass*
 - 4.10.4. *Entrance door: wood or aluminum with a large glass panel at least 3/4 in size*
 - 4.10.5. *Bulkheads: wood panels, polished stone, glass, tile, metal clad plywood parts*
 - 4.10.6. *Storefront cornice: wood, cast iron, sheet metal*
 - 4.10.7. *Side piers should be the same material as the upper facade (typically brick or stone)*

Remodeled and restored storefront facades should adhere to the following:

- 4.11. The remodeled storefront should be designed to fit inside the original opening and not extend beyond or in front of it.
- 4.12. The entry should be maintained and restored in its original location and configuration. If the original entry is gone, the new entry should be designed and placed considering traditional design theme and its relationship to the overall building facade and symmetry.
- 4.13. Storefront bulkheads should be restored or renovated.

Exhibit 5. Components of a Traditional Façade



Source: Plymouth, WI Downtown Design Guidelines (2013).

5. New Infill Building		
Applicability:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> must <input type="checkbox"/> may	This Element be included in project. <input type="checkbox"/> Fast Track
Description:	Infill development is any new construction on an undeveloped lot that is not on the urban fringe. New infill buildings developed in Plymouth’s downtown will adhere to strict standards to ensure the façades look appropriate and compatible amid the surrounding buildings.	
Standards:	<p>Infill buildings must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1. Architecturally complement and be sympathetic to the significant historic buildings of downtown without mimicking them. Ensure the architecture reflects some of the detailing of surrounding buildings in window shapes, cornice lines, and brickwork. 5.2. Maintain a clear distinction between first floor and upper floors. The first floor should have large areas of glass, and upper floors should have an emphasis on solid walls, with less window area. 5.3. Use the average height and width of the surrounding buildings, to determine a general set of proportions for an infill structure, or the bays of a larger structure. 5.4. Ensure the size and proportion of windows and door openings is similar to those on surrounding façades. The same applies to the ratio of window area to solid wall area for the façade. 5.5. Maintain the horizontal alignment of the transom and display windows on the first floor. 5.6. Maintain the pattern created by upper story windows, considering rhythm, horizontal, and vertical alignment. 5.7. <i>Help to carry the rhythms throughout the block (such as window spacing). If the site is large, the mass of the facade can be broken into several small bays, to maintain a rhythm similar to the surrounding buildings.</i> 5.8. <i>Use materials that are compatible in size, scale, texture, and color with the existing color materials</i> 5.9. <i>Select façade colors that relate to the building’s neighbors.</i> 5.10. <i>Consider the details in surrounding masonry buildings such as joint size, quoining, arches, patterns, etc.</i> 	

6. Rear Façade		
Applicability:	<input type="checkbox"/> must <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> may	This Element be included in project. <input type="checkbox"/> Fast Track
Description:	<p>Rear facades are important, especially when visible from Plymouth’s riverfront area or other areas of downtown. Parking areas, as well as some business entries, are sometimes located at the rear of buildings. When rear facades are more visually interesting, they can increase activity and improve appearances.</p>	
Standards:	<p>Rear facades must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1. Include a door and/or window openings that are compatible with building’s architecture. 6.2. Use the same materials and design motifs as on the front and side facades. 6.3. Incorporate wall signs, projecting signs, or awning signs (see Exhibit 6 for reference). 6.4. Include pathways and/or stairs that add or enhance customer access to the building. 6.5. Include an outdoor activity area (e.g., deck or seating), if desired by the property owner. 	

7. Decks, Patios, and Porches		
Applicability:	<input type="checkbox"/> must <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> may	This Element be included in project. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fast Track
Description:	Decks, patios, and porches provide spaces for people to congregate outside on public or private property.	
Standards:	<p>Decks, patios, and porches must:</p> <p>7.1 Encompass massing and details consistent with the architectural style of the building.</p> <p>Decks must:</p> <p>7.2. Not intrude on sidewalks and other walkways.</p> <p>7.3. <i>Be considered on properties facing the Mullet River or parks (to facilitate public interaction), if desired by the property owner.</i></p> <p>Patios must:</p> <p>7.4. Be composed of materials based on the compatibility of those materials with the building’s character. Materials for construction of a low height wall around a patio shall be consistent with the architectural style of the building.</p> <p>7.5. Be colored, textured, or imprinted upon, if made of poured concrete.</p> <p>Porches must:</p> <p>7.6. <i>Only be permitted when appropriate for the architectural style of the building.</i></p>	

8. Signs		
Applicability:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> must <input type="checkbox"/> may	This Element be included in project. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fast Track
Description:	<p>Plymouth’s downtown area contains several different sign types including architectural signs, storefront signs, window signs, awning signs, projecting signs, painted wall signs, and murals (see Exhibit 6 for some examples). In general, signage is expected to be located outside of businesses and are intended to announce businesses’ names.</p> <p>In Plymouth, all signage is subject to Plymouth’s building code and zoning code. Plymouth’s downtown area maintains a secondary set of standards to ensure sign characteristics are designed to enhance the area’s streetscape and historic character.</p>	
Standards:	<p>Signs must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8.1. Adhere to the maximum area of the sign as regulated by Plymouth’s sign ordinance. Graphics in the sign must be included in the maximum allowable area. Actual size may vary, but signboards need not exceed two and a half (2.5) feet high. This size is appropriate for reading distances in a downtown setting. Letters should not be less than eight (8) inches nor more than eighteen (18) inches high. Lettering should account for at least fifty (50) percent and no more than sixty (60) percent of a signboard. 8.2. Be located within/on the building it is referring to. 8.3. Be used to display the primary name of the business only. Use only one line of lettering if possible, leaving out secondary information. 8.4. Be located as to not obscure any architectural features of the building. 8.5. Include only one sign with the business name or graphic logo per street facing side. The exception is that a window sign may be used in addition to other sign types. Note that a projecting sign with two faces is considered one sign. 8.6. Use simple, bold lettering with sufficient contrast between the lettering and the background. 8.7. Be made to make sure that damage to the building is minimized when signage is installed and removed. <i>Reuse of existing mounting brackets, studs or holes is desirable. Never drill holes into bricks, stones, etc.</i> 8.8. <i>Use painted wood where practicable. It is the authentic material and will look appropriate against the weathered brick of Plymouth commercial facades. Modern materials that simulate wood may be acceptable and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.</i> 8.9. <i>Not use changeable or movable letters or graphics.</i> 8.10. <i>Not include a “Trademark” or “Logo.”</i> 8.11. <i>Be located above the storefront display windows but below the sills of second floor windows. In some instances, newer buildings contain areas above the highest windows for signage. This location is acceptable but should be avoided if possible.</i> 	

Another option for a storefront sign location can be an awning, provided the awning is properly integrated with the building.

Regarding the coordination of signs:

- 8.12. *Multiple-tenant buildings should submit a sign package that includes building elevations (drawn to scale), sign types, locations, and sizes. View the building as a whole and plan a unified design strategy to take advantage of all possible sign locations.*
- 8.13. *Tenants and owners should use a common lettering style and color scheme on the building.*
- 8.14. *Design the sign package to emphasize the whole width and geometry of storefronts and individual buildings. Avoid the use of unified signage across multiple buildings that are obviously separate and of different and distinct scale or architecture.*
- 8.15. *Consider giving the entire building an identifiable name (i.e., “Plymouth Mercantile”) with individual business signs near the entrances, or on a common directory.*

Regarding sign lighting:

- 8.16. *Use incandescent indirect lighting and place spotlights discreetly, in such a way as to shield the source from pedestrians and vehicular traffic.*
- 8.17. *Neon lights are permitted in window signs only. Design them with respect from the historic ambiance of the area.*
- 8.18. *Do not use flashing, moving, or intermittent lights.*
- 8.19. *Do not use internally or back-lit signs, either projecting, wall mounted, or hung inside the window.*

Regarding historic and architectural signs:

- 8.20. *The maintenance and restoration of any existing historic sign is encouraged in lieu of replacement.*
- 8.21. *Architectural signs are those which are integrated into the building fabric and are constructed of permanent materials such as stone or metal. These add a sense of history and place to the character and fabric of Plymouth. It is important to preserve existing architectural signs and promote original building names.*

Regarding window signs:

- 8.22. *Keep the display space clear. In these cases, insert the sign at the base and/or the head of the window.*
- 8.23. *Keep the lettering small remembering that the reader will be near the sign. Use several lines where necessary and consider curving the top line at the head of the window.*
- 8.24. *Lettering formed with neon may be used in the inside of the window, provided the size, light intensity, color, and style are consistent with the theme of the building.*

- 8.25. *For total sign area in the windows, refer to the Plymouth sign ordinance. Signage should be sympathetic to the historic nature of downtown.*
- 8.26. *Display street numbers on or directly above the door, and business Regarding architectural signs:*
Regarding projecting signs:
- 8.27. *Keep projecting signs small and simple.*
- 8.28. *Only one projecting sign is permitted per building provided no other signs exist. Supporting brackets for projecting sign should be metal, painted black.*

Exhibit 6. Types of Building Signs



Source: Inner West, accessed via: <https://www.innerwest.nsw.gov.au/about/policies-plans-and-regulations/home-safety-regulations/signs-and-advertising-structures>.

9. Lighting		
Applicability:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> must <input type="checkbox"/> may	This Element be included in project. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fast Track
Description:	Lighting on a building facade can add character to buildings, illuminate the pedestrian environment, and highlight architectural/design features.	
Standards:	<p>Lighting and/or lighting fixtures must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9.1. Be located, aimed, or shielded to minimize glare, sky glow, and stray light trespassing across property lines. 9.2. Incorporate basic light levels as recommended by the City of Plymouth to limit “light pollution” and preserve the nighttime environment. 9.3. Be recessed (i.e., applicable to lights in gas pump island canopies). 9.4. Be located within landscaped areas and not freestanding in parking lots (i.e., applicable to light poles). 9.5. <i>Be concealed or integrated into the overall design of the project. The light source should be hidden from direct pedestrian or motorist view. Pedestrian-level lighting is encouraged along sidewalks and on buildings to enhance area safety and character.</i> 	

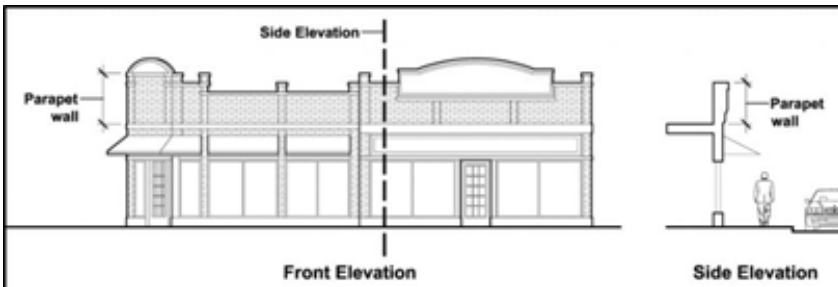
10. Roof Form		
Applicability:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> must <input type="checkbox"/> may	This Element be included in project. <input type="checkbox"/> Fast Track
Description:	Well-designed roofs can help to make buildings look more visually stimulating.	
Standards:	<p>Roofs must:</p> <p>10.1. Be concealed with a parapet if flat. (See Exhibit 7 for parapet examples).</p> <p>10.2. Include details and ornamentation on parapets to reflect the style or period of the building.</p> <p>10.3. Locate and group dormers, as appropriate, according to the precedents of the architectural style of the building. (See Exhibit 8 for dormer examples)..</p> <p>10.4. Conceal protrusions, other than the chimney, behind the primary roof parapet or a screen that matches the architectural character and materials of the structure.</p> <p>10.5. Not use asphalt and fiberglass shingles on vertical surfaces.</p> <p>10.6. Contain and manage water runoff on the property or sent to public draining areas without passing through the neighbor’s property.</p> <p>10.7. <i>(If desired by the property owner) include skylights only if they are architecturally appropriate</i></p> <p>10.8. <i>Use appropriate roofing surfaces and materials. Built-up roofing surfaces are acceptable with very low pitched or flat roofs concealed with a parapet. Synthetic rubber roofing is appropriate for very low pitched or flat roofs concealed with a parapet. Fiberglass membranes are also available in this category of roofing. Asphalt shingles are acceptable for use on all pitched roofing types. Thicker shingle types with shadowed edges are preferred. The use of clay tile is encouraged if appropriate to the architectural characteristics of the building. Cement tiles are acceptable if they maintain the characteristics of traditional clay tile, or another more traditional roofing material. The use of slate is encouraged if appropriate to the architectural characteristics of the building. Sheet metal shingles and standing seam metal will be reviewed for approval on a case-by-case basis.</i></p>	

Exhibit 7. Parapet Walls



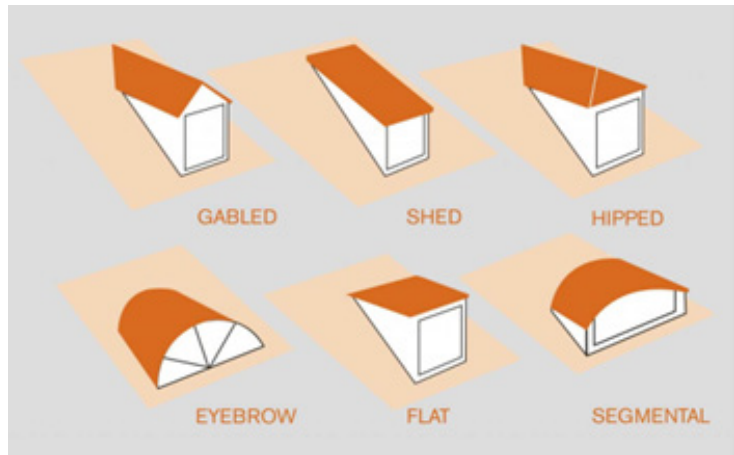
Source:

(Top Image) Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment (March 2018), accessed via <https://www.building.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/building-code-compliance/b-stability/b1-structure/guidance-securing-parapets-facades.pdf>.



(Bottom Image) HOWTOCIVIL (2021), accessed via <https://www.howtocivil.com/parapet-wall-design-types-and-functions/>.

Exhibit 8. Types of Dormer Windows



Source: (Left) BLRPC. (Right) InterNACHI (2018), accessed via: <https://forum.nachi.org/t/roof-and-dormer-types/125612>.

11. Outdoor Dining		
Applicability:	<input type="checkbox"/> must <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> may	This Element be included in project. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fast Track
Description:	Outdoor dining can benefit the property owner the outdoor dining serves. It can also enhance the pedestrian realm and encourage activity. Outdoor dining is subject to City Plan Commission approval	
Standards:	Outdoor dining must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11.1. Be associated with an adjacent eating or drinking establishment. 11.2. Provide space for pedestrians to pass when outdoor dining infringes upon or is directly adjacent to a public right-of-way or walkway. 11.3. Be appropriate for the architectural character of the building. 11.4. (If desired by the property owner) include a seasonal fence around outdoor dining areas which is no higher than thirty-six (36) inches <i>and be constructed of materials appropriate for the architectural character of the building (e.g., brick, stone, or a decorative landscape block).</i> 11.5. <i>Include public seating areas consistent with the style of other public amenities, if adjacent to or located within public areas.</i> 	

12. Fencing and Retaining Walls		
Applicability:	<input type="checkbox"/> must <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> may	This Element be included in project. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fast Track
Description:	Fencing and retaining walls are visual barriers purposed for concealment or decoration. In many instances they are purposed to conceal trash receptacles, condensers, or transformers which occupy the same general areas desired for pedestrians.	
Standards:	Fencing and retaining walls must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12.1. Be built of brick and suitable masonry units, stone, decorative metal, <i>or another material compatible with the adjacent building.</i> 12.2. Not be made of stockade, bound-on board, picket, and chain link. Permanent or retractable security gates or bars is also not prohibited. <i>Certain types of interlocking concrete block and landscaping timbers are not desired.</i> 	

13. Mechanical Equipment, Loading Docks, and Refuse Container Concealment		
Applicability:	<input type="checkbox"/> must <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> may	This Element be included in project. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fast Track
Description:	<p>Concealment and/or screening of mechanical equipment, loading docks/service areas, and refuse containers helps to hide unsightly building elements from view.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanical equipment includes, but is not limited to, air compressors, HVAC equipment, solar panels, window air conditioners, utility boxes, pedestals, satellite dishes, and vents/stacks. • Loading docks and service areas are sections of a building where goods from vehicles are loaded and unloaded. These docks/areas are commonly found on commercial, industrial, and warehouse buildings. • Refuse containers includes any waste or recycling container, including dumpsters, trash cans, garbage pails, and plastic trash bags. 	
Standards:	<p>Mechanical equipment must:</p> <p>13.1. Be concealed behind the primary roof parapet (or a screen that matches the architectural character and materials of the structure), if located on the roof of a structure.</p> <p>13.2. Be underground, if the mechanical equipment is newly installed utility services and/or service revisions necessitated by exterior alterations.</p> <p>13.3. <i>Be concealed from public rights-of-way, walkways, primary customer parking areas, and neighboring residential or public uses to the highest degree possible. Electrical service boxes are excluded from this requirement but should be located as unobtrusively as possible.</i></p> <p>Loading docks must:</p> <p>13.4. <i>Not face a public street and be hidden from view by a planted landscape buffer if visible from the river and parks.</i></p> <p>13.5. <i>Be located or screened so that they are not visible from the pedestrian level. Screening materials and design should be compatible with building architecture and other site features.</i></p> <p>Refuse containers must:</p> <p>13.6. <i>Be concealed from public rights-of-way, walkways, primary customer parking areas, and neighboring residential or public uses to the highest degree possible.</i></p> <p>13.7. <i>Be colored, styled, and made of materials consistent with the principal structure. This includes publicly accessible refuse containers, which may be found adjacent to an outdoor eating area.</i></p> <p>13.8. <i>Incorporate landscaping material around refuse container screening.</i></p>	

14. River Orientation/Riverwalk		
Applicability:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> must <input type="checkbox"/> may	This Element be included in project. <input type="checkbox"/> Fast Track
Description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase awareness of and appreciation for the Mullet River and improve the appearance of the business districts as seen from the Mullet River, Utility Park, Huson Park, Stayer Park, etc. • To increase the use of the parks for recreational and tourist-oriented activities and to promote the riverwalk experience. • To create links between the downtown and the river that enhance the pedestrian experience. 	
Standards:	<p>River orientation/riverwalk locations must:</p> <p>14.1. Renovation and new development on sites with views of the Mullet River should promote interaction between the river and the riverwalk. Building activities should be oriented toward the river where practical. Large windowless walls, service areas, utilities, etc. should be designed sympathetically with the views and activities of the river.</p> <p>14.2. Buildings on parcels adjacent to the Mullet River and/or parks are highly visible from these public areas and shall be designed, constructed, and maintained to ensure an attractive appearance. Materials selected from the main facades may differ from those approved for the secondary facades, but general design treatment and color schemes shall be consistent around all sides of the building.</p> <p>14.3. Business uses facing the river are encouraged, especially recreation and tourist-oriented uses. If the building has entrances from both Mill Street and the riverside, the front, or street entrance, should be treated as the primary entrance.</p> <p>14.4. Rear entries should be inviting and attractive. Options to achieve this goal include a glass door, ample windows, signage identifying the business, an awning or canopy above the doorway, appropriate lighting, landscaping, planter boxes, etc.</p> <p>14.5. Outdoor storage of any kind, excluding seasonal retail product displays, shall be screened from view from the river and from neighboring parcels.</p> <p>14.6. Rear patios and decks that allow views of the river and parks are strongly encouraged.</p> <p>14.7. Pedestrian connections to the riverside trail are strongly encouraged. Existing pedestrian connections from the street to the river should be preserved and maintained.</p> <p>14.8. All plantings within fifty (50) feet of the river edge shall be native and noninvasive species.</p>	

Formation of an Architectural Design Sub-Committee

Composition

The Architectural Design Sub-Committee (ADC) shall consist of five (5) members, one (1) of which shall be an elected official; and four (4) members consisting of at least one (1) architect, one (1) downtown business/property owner, and one (1) City/Town of Plymouth citizen. Other members shall be persons of recognized experience and qualifications. Two alternate members may be appointed by the Mayor to serve on the ADC in the event a standing member is removed or unable to serve for any reason.

Individuals are nominated by the Mayor and appointment is subject to confirmation by the Common Council. The members of the ADC shall be appointed for a term of 3 years (1 year for alternates) at the annual organizational meeting of the Council. The Mayor offers existing members in good standing the opportunity to be nominated for subsequent reappointment(s). Their terms shall begin on May 1st following appointment. If a vacancy occurs in any of the above-mentioned positions, the Mayor may appoint a successor at any time to fill the unexpired term in that position. No compensation shall be paid for serving on ADC.

The ADC shall, at its first meeting in May of each year, elect a Sub-Committee Chair, Vice-Chair, and Sub-Committee Secretary.

Attendance

Dedicated attendance at all meetings of the ADC and careful performance of the duties required of members shall be a prerequisite to continuous membership on the Sub-Committee. Should a member fail to attend three (3) consecutive regular meetings of the Sub-Committee, and should there be no adequate excuse for such absences, or if a member misses more than six (6) meetings in a period of one year, the Chair, with the agreement of a majority of the entire Sub-Committee, shall recommend to the Common Council that the member be removed and that the vacated position be filled.

Powers and Duties

The purpose of the ADC is to ensure that all construction and structures within Plymouth's Downtown Planning Area Overlay District meet standards of architectural quality, consistency, aesthetic design, and finish of the city's Downtown Design Standards.

The ADC is established to approve or disapprove the design of new non-residential and multifamily development, and non-residential building additions, remodels, redevelopments, and site improvements located in Plymouth's Downtown Planning Area Overlay District.

New and existing single-family residential developments **do not** need to comply with the downtown design standards and guidelines overlay zoning district.

Notification

The ADC's agenda shall be distributed to Sub-Committee members no later than three (3) calendar days prior to a scheduled Sub-Committee meeting. The form of the agenda shall be approved by the Sub-Committee and shall contain the following paragraphs:

“Applicants are hereby notified to be present or to have an authorized agent attend the meeting. Any discussions and/or presentations made by an authorized agent shall be binding. Failure to attend will prevent consideration of the application. Persons having an interest in the above are invited to attend.

If any applicant decides to appeal any decision made with respect to any matter considered at this meeting, it shall be the responsibility of the applicant to provide testimony and any evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.”

Meetings/Sub-Committee Decisions

Scheduled meetings shall be held at City Hall. Meetings may be called at the Sub-Committee Chairperson's discretion but shall allow time for a minimum notice of three (3) working days to designate the place, time and notification of the applicant.

A quorum shall consist of three (3) members of the Sub-Committee. All decisions require the concurrence of at least three (3) members. No letters of proxies from absent Sub-Committee members shall be read or considered. No Sub-Committee member shall take part in the consideration of any case in which he/she is a party or has a financial interest.

The applicant or an authorized representative must be present at the meeting to represent the application and respond to questions. At the meeting, City staff will present a staff report with pictures and staff's recommendation. Following the staff report, the applicant will be given the opportunity to present the proposal with any changes or corrections to the report. The ADC will ask any questions they may have and may ask for changes, if appropriate. The Sub-Committee will then vote to approve the application as submitted or modified, defer for further study, or deny the application.

Documentation Required of the Applicant for Sub-Committee Review

Depending on the nature of the project, the applicant is expected to submit the following information at least thirty (30) days in advance of any scheduled meeting of the Architectural Review Sub-Committee:

- Site plans, floor plans, building elevations with appropriate detail on the design of doors;
- windows, ornamentation, signs, lighting, visible mechanical equipment, and other details;
- Landscape plans;
- Estimate of finished project value;
- Proposed signs;
- Proposed lighting;
- Samples of colors and materials;
- Preliminary engineering plans for streets, paths, parking lots, etc.;
- Photographs of the site, building, and/or surrounding properties; and
- Any other information that would assist the Sub-Committee in evaluating the application.

Fast Track Review Procedures

In the interest of expediting an applicant's request through the architectural review process, the Architectural Review Sub-Committee may consider City staff recommendations in lieu of applicant testimony for abbreviated review and approval. A simple majority of the Sub-Committee may proceed with an abbreviated review process if further review is necessary at the request of City staff.

The Fast Track process may typically take City staff 30-to-45 days to render a decision following application submittal. However, each application is reviewed on a case-by-case basis and will be dependent on the nature of Fast Track project and whether ADC review is requested by City staff, requiring additional time to approve or deny the application.

Approval or Denial

Approved applications by the Architectural Review Sub-Committee shall be presented to the City Zoning Administrator. The Zoning Administrator will issue a Certificate of Compliance for a successful downtown design review application. A Certificate of Compliance is necessary as part of the zoning permit process.

Denied applications may be appealed to the City of Plymouth Board of Appeals at the discretion of the applicant in accordance with the City's established appeals process detailed in Title 13 of Plymouth's Municipal Code.

Hire an Economic Development Director at the City of Plymouth.

Hiring an Economic Development Director would provide Plymouth with an individual that will work to strengthen the local economy and diversify the city's tax base. The Economic Development Director organizes the recruiting of new businesses, retaining existing ones, and assisting businesses when they can expand operations locally. These events bring additional tax revenue and provide citizens with new employment opportunities.

In an effort to implement this Downtown Design Strategy, the Economic Development Director will work explore funding options, work with downtown property owners to address concerns, promote the City of Plymouth, and support continued revitalization of the downtown area.

1. Hiring Process

The Economic Development Director is hired through the city's normal hiring process. The position is a full-time role that reports to the Mayor. Other city officials and local business leaders may serve on an interview panel when the City fills a vacancy.

2. Qualifications

This Economic Development Director position requires a high-level of technical and professional competency with a proven and verifiable track record of success. Graduation from an accredited four-year college or university with a degree in economic development, marketing, public relations, or business management is required. Additionally, the candidate should possess five (5) years of progressive management responsibility with experience in a municipal setting or any combination of education and experience needed to meet the qualifications of the position. Private sector experience may also be useful because so much of the position revolves around building relationships and trust with business leaders.

Necessary knowledge, skills and abilities:

- Professional maturity and self-confidence to provide administrative insights.
- Ability to firmly and diplomatically present professional views, concerns, and implications of proposed action which may be under consideration, with commitment to impartiality.
- Strong communication, interpersonal, and team building skills and the ability to effectively work with a wide range of individuals and constituencies in a diverse community.
- Knowledge of State statutes, City ordinances, City policy statements, and policies regarding recreation administration.
- Strategic planning skills.
- Ability to gather data, investigate and analyze information while being able to draw conclusions and issue recommendations.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Economic development director administers economic development programs for the City of Plymouth. While the position deals with individual businesses in individual situations, they maintain a macro-level perspective on the city's economy. The Economic development director studies market trends and applies their expert judgment to opportunities and threats facing the local economy.

The economic development director advises the city manager and council on emerging and existing economic development issues. The director may also present to local civic and business groups on proposed economic development agreements.

To ensure that businesses are treated fairly, the director writes city policy governing how tax and other incentives will be awarded to businesses. These policies affect what sort of economic impact must be reasonably expected in order for businesses to qualify for particular incentives. Economic development policies are ultimately approved by the Common Council. Deviations from policy are also brought to the Common Council for approval.

4. Economic Growth

The Economic Development Director maintains an inventory of available properties for businesses to occupy including retail space, industrial space, and open land. The director should try to match businesses to available space so that business can boost substantial job opportunities to existing and new residents. Hundreds of new jobs mean new housing construction, more retail establishments, and more city revenue.

In addition to bringing in new businesses, the director's role is to strengthen the businesses already located in the city. Work with businesses to remain where they are and expand operations when appropriate. Losing an existing business can be worse than having a new business choose to locate elsewhere. Missing out on a new business means no economic impact. Losing an existing business means an adverse economic impact to the city.

Improve the City of Plymouth's facade and signage grant program

- Update the existing grant form to include current contact information.
- Update the program parameters and include important contextual information about the program. For example, reference the design standards that applicants must adhere to as a condition for receiving grant money.
- Identify improvements that are ineligible, potentially eligible, and not eligible.
- Increase the maximum grant amount that can be awarded (and the extent to which award caps vary by improvement type) -- this will likely require the City to identify an effective, ongoing funding stream to support this program.
- Consider modifying the Facade Improvement Grant to the Exterior Improvement Grant (to allow rear and side building improvements to potentially be funded too).

Improve how the the grant program is promoted (e.g., via continuous, direct outreach).

Evaluate the installation of placemaking elements to improve the look and appeal of the downtown area

The purpose of this recommendation is to transform spaces, often overlooked, into well-designed places for people to congregate. It will likely require the development of one or more programs to establish the parameters that property or business owners may follow prior to implementing placemaking projects on portions of City-owned rights-of-way (e.g., on-street parking stalls and alleyways). Placemaking program ideas, as discussed by the Ad-Hoc Committee, include a parklet program and an alleyway improvement program.

A parklet is a sidewalk extension onto one or more on-street parking stalls. The extension provides more space and amenities for people using the street. Parklets are typically used for passive recreation, public seating, and/or outdoor dining. An alleyway improvement program could serve in a similar capacity by providing space for public art, outdoor dining, etc.

The Placemaking Process

The placemaking process for Plymouth's Downtown project area can be used either in retrofitting an existing space or planning a new space. Because every situation is different, the steps are not always exactly the same, nor do they always happen in the same order. The following is a five-step process to get more people involved in observing, planning, and shaping a place.

1. Define Place & Identify Stakeholders

Selecting the right site and stakeholders is a crucial first step to turning a place around. The placemaking process starts with a meeting to engage community representatives from public, private, and civic sectors in order to identify the main issues that different groups face, and to identify a particular place or places to focus their placemaking efforts.

A rule of thumb: When selecting stakeholders should have some direct connection, as well as an interest in, the space. They may include residents, businesses adjacent to the space, and cultural, religious, or educational organizations. Government officials are facilitators and partners in implementing the community's vision.

Key questions to consider in stakeholder outreach include:

- Who is interested in having things change?
- Are they willing to participate in some way using their talents or funds?
- Are there any existing funds that could be used to make improvements or program the space?
- Are there existing organizations that could provide long-term management for the space?

2. Evaluate Space & Identify Issues

In this step, participants take stock of how a space is used, and how it can be improved. A Placemaking Workshop is one of the most effective tools to make use of stakeholders' knowledge, intuition, common sense, and input. The goal of the Placemaking Workshop is to better understand the space and its challenges.

3. Place Vision

In this step, key stakeholders develop a Place Vision, based on insights from the Placemaking Workshop. This document includes several parts:

- A mission or statement of goals. Shared goals of stakeholders are a foundation for a Place Vision.
- A definition of how a space will be used, and by whom. The nature of the space guides the goals of those involved.
- A description of the intended character of the space. A clear idea of what the space will be keeps the vision focused.
- A concept plan for how the space could be designed. Once an initial concept plan has been created, assess the feasibility of the plan and identify any barriers to implementation.
- Successful examples of similar spaces or parts of spaces.
- An action plan for short-term and long-term improvements.

Just as important as the Place Vision document is the subsequent plan for management. A management organization is necessary to keep a space active and well-maintained.

4. Short-Term Experiments

The most important step in the placemaking process is implementation—putting the vision into action. Good public spaces don't happen overnight, and people do not need to have all the answers at the outset to start improving. The key is to help the space grow incrementally by implementing and evaluating projects.

These projects consist of short-term improvements and programs that require a short timeline and a small budget, and can be easily undone. However, they are not an end in themselves. These projects are an opportunity to test ideas that will help implement the community's Place Vision for their public space.

Short-term projects can take many forms, requiring varying degrees of time, money, and effort, such as:

- Amenities. From flexible seating to book and game kiosks to planters of petunias to rotating public art, amenities provide a low-cost means to add activity and comfort to a space.
- Programming. Regular events can build momentum, showcase local talent, and build new partnerships. While one-off events cannot take the place of ongoing programming, they can help test new ideas and adapt the community vision.
- Light Development. Temporary structures can provide an alternative to capital-intensive construction. Existing buildings can be given a facelift, while sheds, vending carts, shipping containers, and tensile structures can enable new uses, forge an identity, and attract additional investment.

5. Ongoing Reevaluation & Long-Term Improvements

It is easy to forget that a public space project will never be finished! While short-term experiments can jump-start the placemaking process, they never truly finish the job on their own.

Creating great places is an ever-evolving process: It is important to check in on earlier projects by performing an evaluation of the space at different times of the day and year. The best parks have maintenance and programming staff members complete evaluations on a regular basis, as part of their long-term plan—some as often as once a day. Beyond looking for things that are “broken,” it focuses on how parts of the space are used over time.

With this information, managers can continue to re-invent the space and pursue more long-term improvements, such as removing physical barriers, adding a ground-floor use to the blank wall of a building, or constructing additional structures for programming or storage. When needed, additional experts, consultants, and partners can help address specific remaining challenges.

Adapting the management plan in accordance with changing circumstances also ensures that the space is well-loved and well-used over time.

Support the formation of a steering committee to explore the establishment of a downtown business improvement district.

A business improvement district (BID) is a special assessment district, authorized under state law. It is a defined commercial and/or industrial area, governed by a board of directors. When a BID is formed, property owners inside the BID are assessed an additional property tax to pay for specific projects and services that improve and market the area. A BID for the downtown area can provide the funding mechanism and operational structure to enhance Plymouth's commercial core.

The City of Plymouth should support the formation of a steering committee to evaluate the extent to which it makes sense for the City to initiate the formation of a downtown BID. The steering committee should include representatives from different downtown business and property owners, representatives from the City of Plymouth and the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce, and representatives from Plymouth's Downtown Arts and Merchants group.

SUMMARY OF PROJECT APPENDICES

The BLRPC put together the following appendices to document important details and interim work products prepared for this project. The appendices help to inform the recommendations of this project as well as provide background information and cursory details about the Plymouth downtown planning area.

Appendix A: Existing Conditions

Appendix A presents the details of a review of existing conditions in Plymouth’s downtown planning area. The information compiled in this appendix helped to inform the development of recommendations found in this plan. Appendix B can also serve as a baseline of data and information to evaluate future changes and conditions to, once recommendations are implemented and have time to influence the area.

Appendix B: Case Study Evaluation

Appendix B documents an evaluation of communities with successful downtowns. The evaluation helped to inform the development of recommendations found in this plan.

Appendix C: Funding Options Matrix

Appendix C identifies and describes a range of funding tools that the City of Plymouth may implement, apply for, or use to fund initiatives, projects, programs, and personnel aimed at improving the downtown planning area.



PLYMOUTH
DOWNTOWN DESIGN STRATEGY

