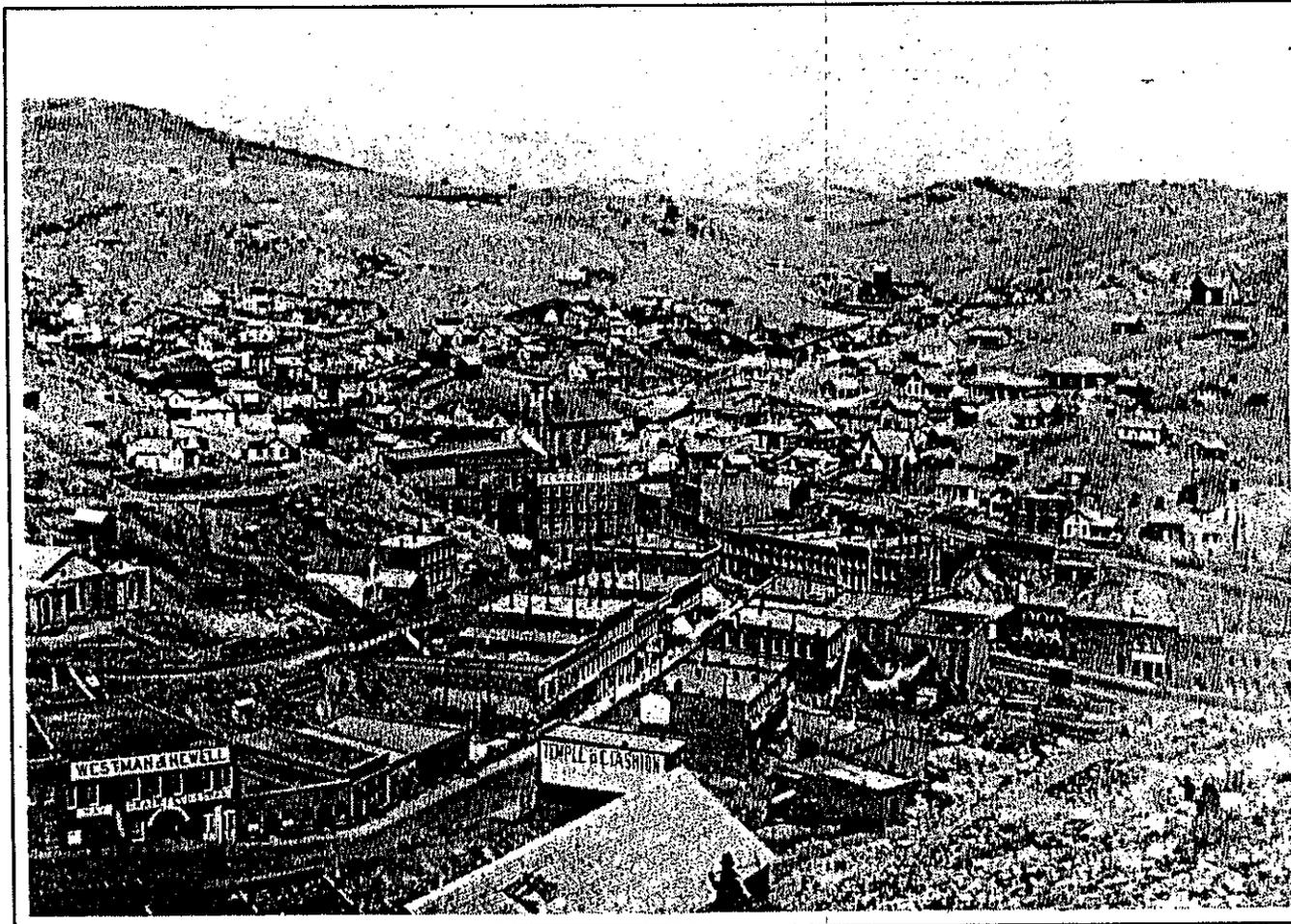


CHAPTER 6:

COMMERCIAL CORE NEIGHBORHOOD



DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR CENTRAL CITY

Chapter Cover Photograph:

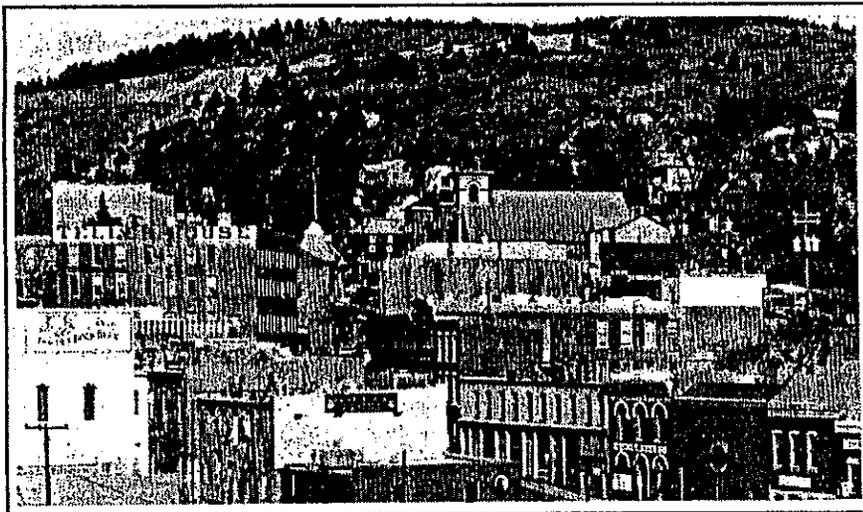
Central City viewed northwest from Central hill, circa 1882. Courtesy of the Central City Historic Preservation Commission.

CHAPTER 6 COMMERCIAL CORE NEIGHBORHOOD: DESIGN GUIDELINES

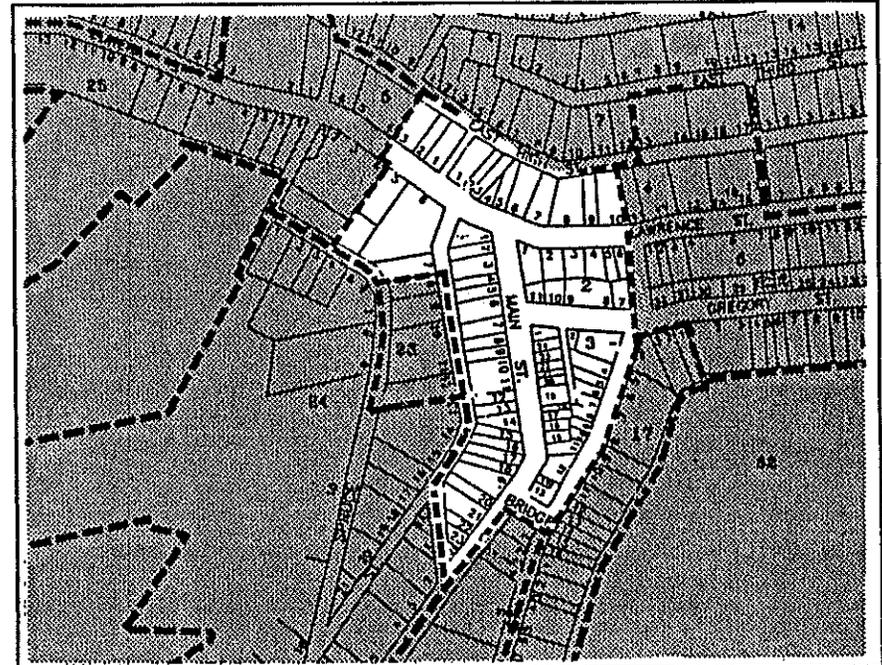
The Commercial Core contains the center of traditional business activity of the City and includes Main Street, the westernmost portions of Gregory and Lawrence Streets as well as a portion of Spring Street. See the map below for the complete boundary delineation.

Goals for the Neighborhood

Most building sites in the Commercial Core retain their historic buildings. When standing on the street, the perception of the character of the area is as it once was. Because the Commercial Core remains relatively intact, the goal for the area is to preserve the sense of time and place that exists here. The City seeks to maintain the retail and commercial character of this neighborhood by prohibiting the construction of wood buildings and/or residences. This means that the visual impacts of change should be minimized. The preservation of historic buildings is a high priority and new construction should be similar in character and scale to the historic context.



Because the Commercial Core remains relatively intact, the goal for the area is to preserve the sense of time and place that exists here.



The Commercial Core Neighborhood

Historical Descriptions

Building Description (Historical)

Before the great fire of 1874, the Commercial Core was a crowded, densely built-up neighborhood of one- and two-story wood frame structures and shanties abutting one another on narrow, curving streets of dirt and mud. Storefronts lined the street edge with large panes of glass on the first level, while on the second floor level, smaller, rectangular windows were standard. Roofs were mostly gabled, and hidden by false storefronts with a decorative cornice. Other roof types were shed or sloping slightly to the rear. Walls were clad in wood lap siding or board-and-batten with a lack of ornament. The few brick or stone buildings that existed prior to 1874 were the Roworth Block (1862 and 1868), the Wisebart Hall (1868), the Teller House (1872) and the Register Block or Masonic Temple (1864). All construction that occurred after the fire was of brick and stone, and looks the same today as it did back then. These "new" buildings were generally referred to as "Blocks" especially if they were composed of two or more building lots and the structures were frequently named after their owners.

Rising two and three stories in height with elaborate storefronts at the street level, the upper facades were generally plain in appearance. Many can be dated by the style of their window casings. Buildings that predate the 1874 fire generally have windows that are half-moon in shape; from 1874 to 1890 they have flatter arches than previous years but are not rectangular; and in the 1890s and later, the window casings are generally rectangular with flat arches.

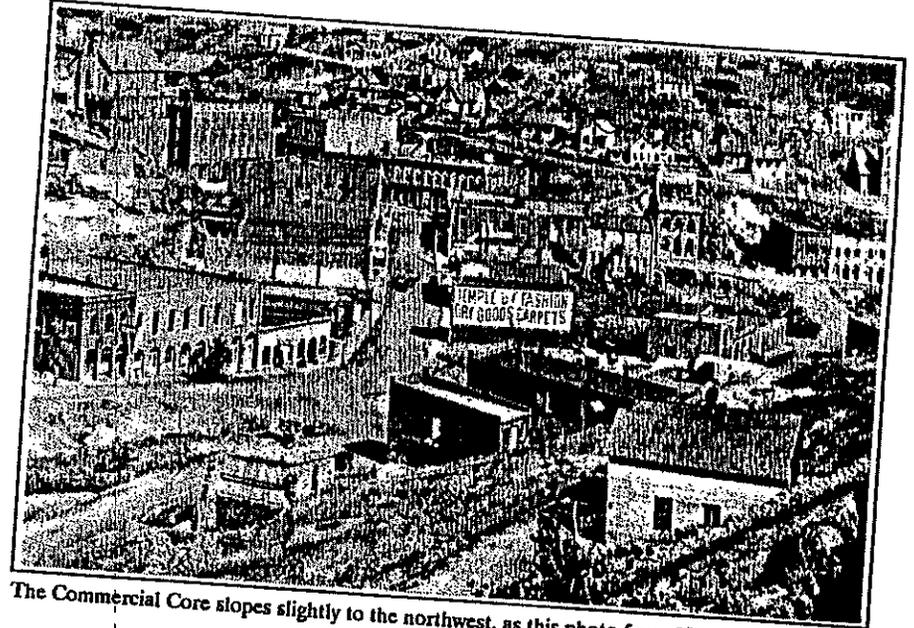
Building foundations were required to be taken down to bedrock and any wall below street level had to be three feet thick if made of stone and two feet thick if made of brick. Entries were typically recessed and flanked by vertically proportioned display windows at either side. They shared party walls and displayed a horizontal continuity established by the storefronts, signage bands and elaborate cornice lines.



The Commercial Core, 4th of July, 1890s. The rhythm of upper story windows was already clearly established as an important characteristic.

Site Description (Historical)

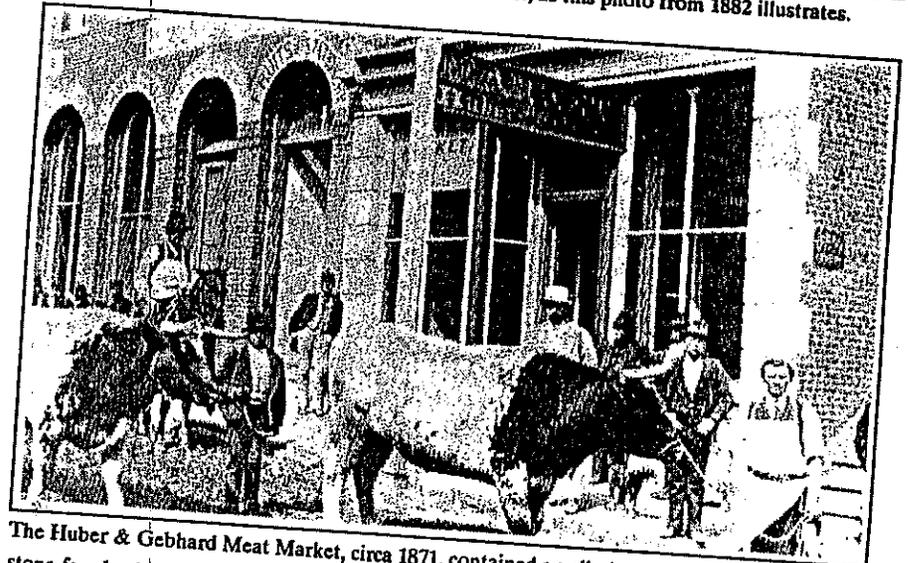
This neighborhood had the highest density of buildings in Central City. These structures sat directly on dirt streets, and some (especially before 1874) had porches and hitching posts. Following the fire, streets were straightened and widened to the present-day widths. The sidewalks on Eureka, Main and Lawrence Streets were established at 7-1/2 feet wide, and were of wood plank or stone construction.



The Commercial Core slopes slightly to the northwest, as this photo from 1882 illustrates.

Neighborhood Views and Character (Historical)

The views from this neighborhood remain unchanged. They are constricted by the two- and three-story structures which lined the streets of the Commercial Core. Looking east down Gregory Street, the gulch was much more built-up and active. The view north of the High Street neighborhood looked about the same, but with fewer trees. The same was true looking south and west, toward Gunnell Hill and the Spring and Spruce Street neighborhoods. Although the streets were compressed by the wall of continuous buildings on either side, there remained an open character to the streets which was created by the large storefronts that provided views of displayed items and the building interior.

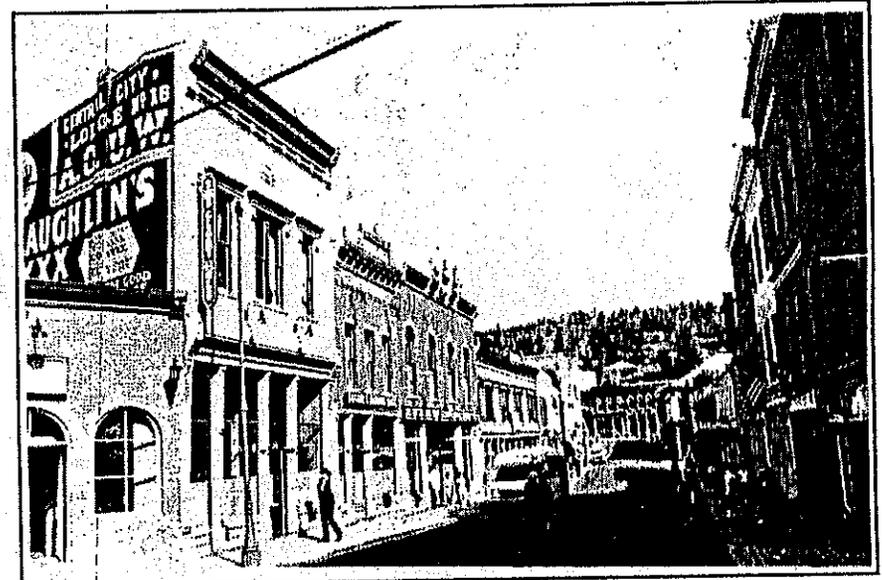


The Huber & Gebhard Meat Market, circa 1871, contained an all-glass storefront with flanking stone-faced columns.

Present Day (1992) Descriptions

Building Description (1992)

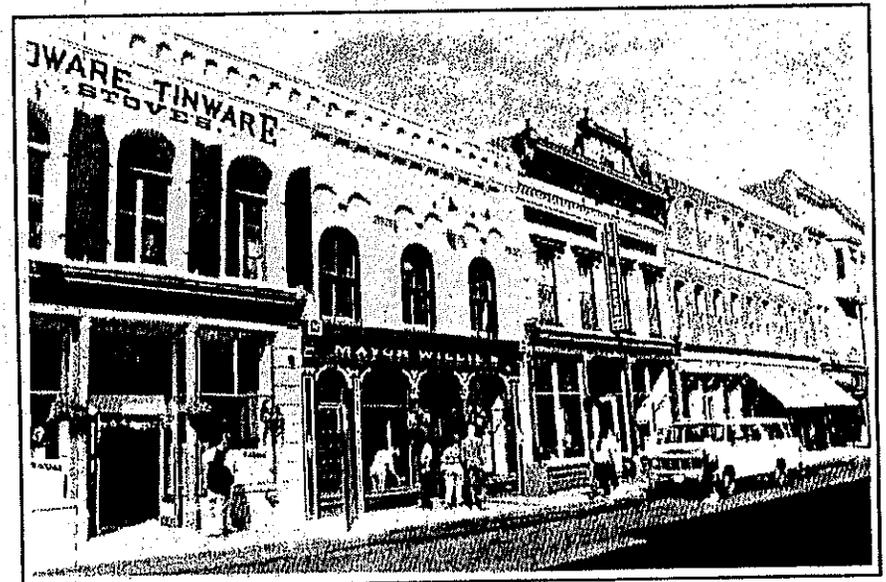
The Commercial Core neighborhood has a generally uniform character due to the fact that most of the town center was reconstructed in a short time, following the fire of 1874. The style can be described as commercial vernacular with a variety of detail styles, including Italianate, Queen Anne, and Neo-Gothic. The buildings are two and three stories of brick and stone construction. The predominant roof form is flat. Most buildings have storefronts with large panes of glass, ornate cast iron, and a detailed cornice. Most second- and third-story windows have stone sills and lintels; some buildings contain decorative pediments of iron or wood.



Main Street, 1992

Site Description (1992)

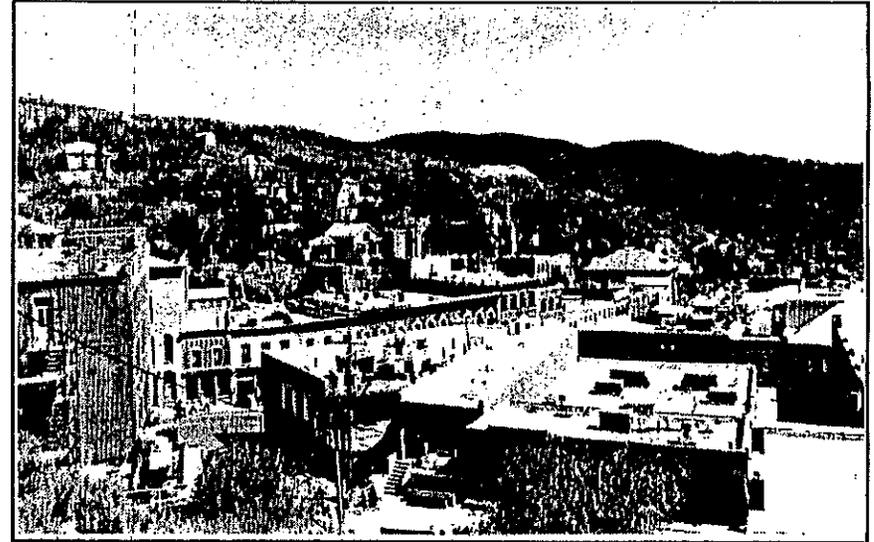
The Commercial Core neighborhood has the highest density of buildings in Central City. The facades sit directly on the street, creating a continuous building wall with a consistent height and rhythm of window and door openings. The streets in this area are paved and contain sidewalks on both sides. Virtually all the open space in this Neighborhood is hard surfaces. The majority of sidewalks are made of flagstone which adds to the character of the street and is compatible with the buildings.



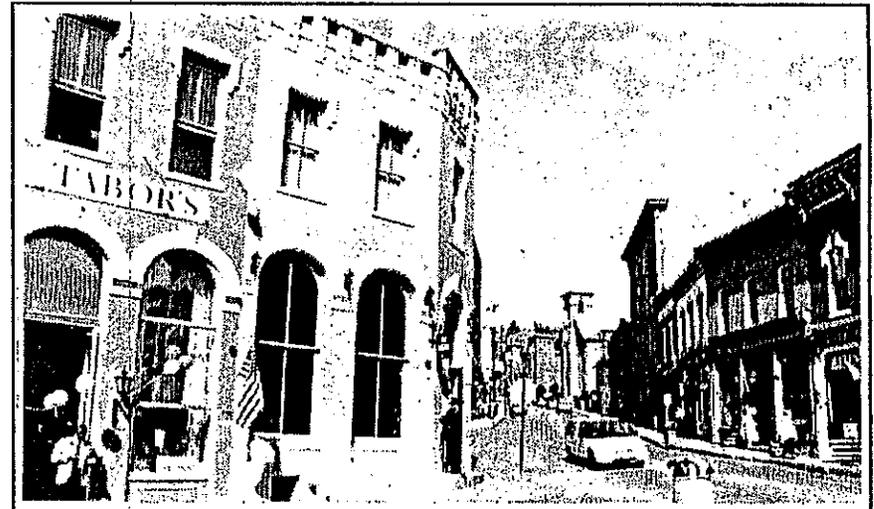
The Commercial Core, 1992

Neighborhood Views and Character Description (1992)

The views in this neighborhood are constricted by the two-story structures which flank both sides of the streets. The view down Main Street (north) dead-ends into the Mellor Block. Looking east, there are views down Lawrence Street; looking west, the buildings on Pine Street are visible over the top of the Main Street buildings. Scattered throughout the Commercial Core are glimpses of the surrounding mountains, tailings and mine waste dumps. The character of this neighborhood is established by masonry commercial buildings fronting up to the street, which allows for direct views from the street onto the storefronts of these buildings. There is little view separation from the street into the ground floor because of large panes of glass. Therefore the activities occurring within these commercial structures are readily apparent.



The view looking to the east, over the Commercial Core, 1992. Scattered throughout the Commercial Core are glimpses of the surrounding mountains, tailings and mine waste dumps.



The character of this neighborhood is established by masonry commercial buildings fronting up to the street, which allows for direct views from the street onto the storefronts of these buildings.

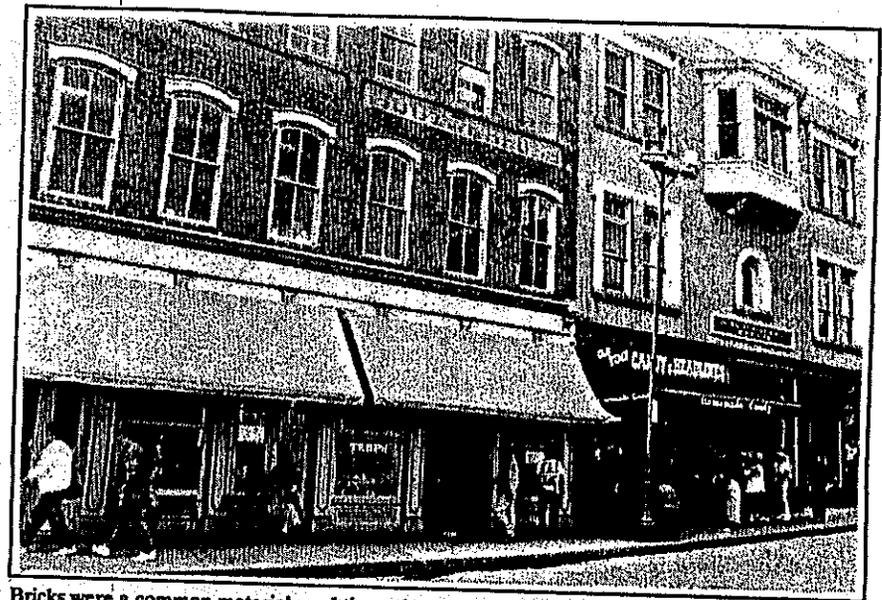
Building Design Guidelines

A distinctive feature of the Commercial Core is the exclusive use of masonry as the primary building material. Building materials for new structures therefore should appear to be the same as those of historic structures in the area in order to reinforce the visual continuity of the Commercial Core.

Guideline 1:

Use facade materials that are similar to those used traditionally.

- Masonry (brick or stone) is required as the primary building material.
- Subtle distinctions in materials between new and old construction are encouraged. This could include dating the building or using new brick.
- Brick, stone and painted wood and metal are appropriate trim materials.
- New materials that appear to be the same in scale, texture and finish as those used historically may be considered.



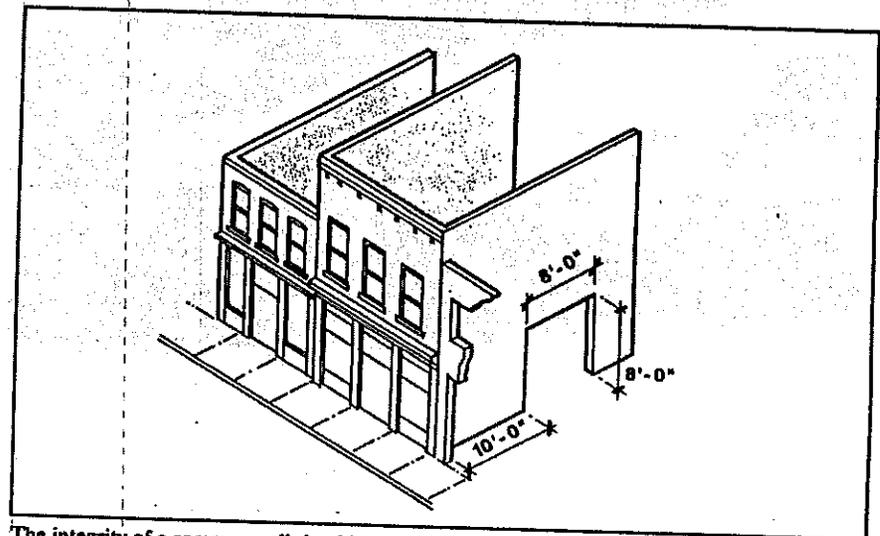
Bricks were a common material used throughout the Commercial Core after the Fire of 1874.

Common party walls between buildings are important features in the historic district, and must be preserved. Large openings that destroy the sense of wall are inappropriate.

Guideline 2:

Maintain the historic character and structural integrity of common walls.

- Openings in party walls are to be a minimum of 10 feet back from the front facade.
- Openings are not to exceed 8 feet wide by 8 feet high. Any deviation from these dimensions must be justified through engineering reports, exit requirements or accessibility requirements.



The integrity of a common wall should be maintained by limiting the size of openings in an existing wall.

In the Commercial Core, the heights of historic buildings range from one story to four stories and footprints vary from 800 square feet to 30,000 square feet. All new construction should fall within this range. This will not only reinforce the historic character of the neighborhood, but also maintain consistency in the Commercial Core in terms of the scale of buildings evident today. Consistency with historic building heights is an important factor that contributes to the visual continuity of the Commercial Core. New buildings should not overwhelm historic structures in terms of building height, but rather should approximate those heights historically found along the block.

Guideline 3:

Footprints of new buildings should be similar to those found historically.

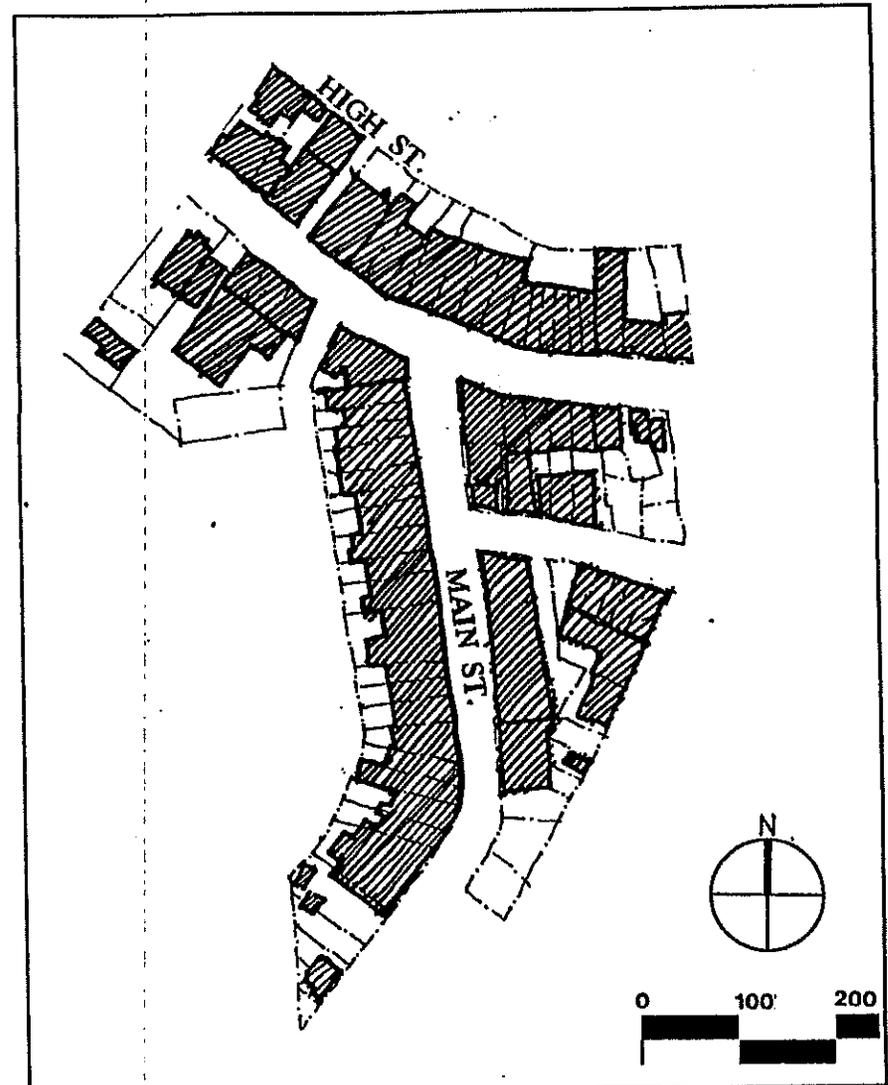
- Buildings should be built to the front and side property lines.

Buildings are densely-built in the Commercial Core Neighborhood. While some gaps between structures may exist, buildings are typically built to the side lot lines. This feature should be reinforced in new construction because it establishes a rhythm of facades that contributes to the visual continuity of the Commercial Core.

Guideline 4:

Reinforce the pattern of historic building front widths.

- The building front of a new structure should be similar in scale to those found historically; typically these were 20 to 50 feet wide with the average being 25 feet wide.
- If the building is greater than 50 feet wide, the perceived facade width module should fall within the 25 foot wide average. This means that the storefront pattern should be differentiated every 25 feet on average.
- A minimum 10 foot deep (front to rear) demising wall should be repeated every 25 feet.



Building footprints from the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1900.

Guideline 5:

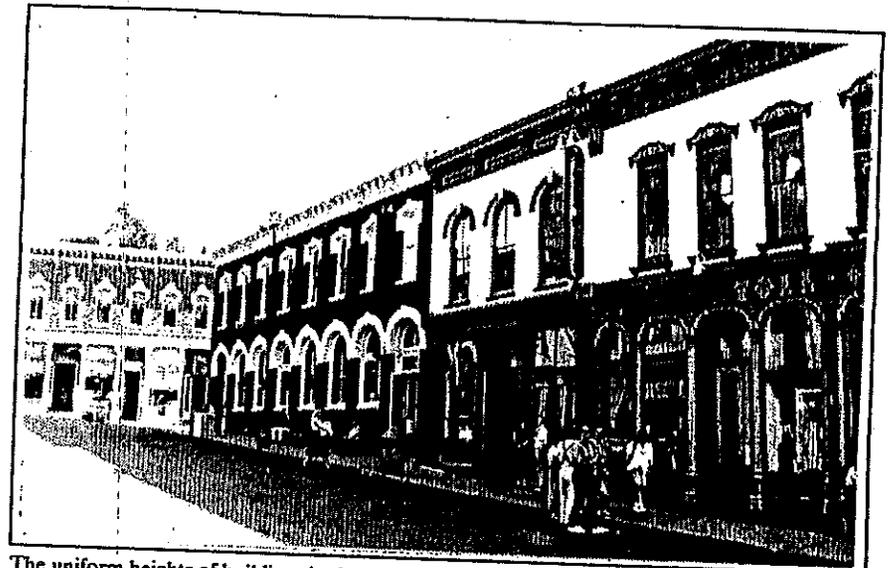
Building heights should be similar to those of nearby historic structures.

- The primary facade should align in height with existing facades immediately adjacent to the proposed facade.
- If no existing facades align with the proposed building facade, this primary facade should approximate the heights historically found along the block.
- Also refer to height limits established by City zoning ordinances for this area.

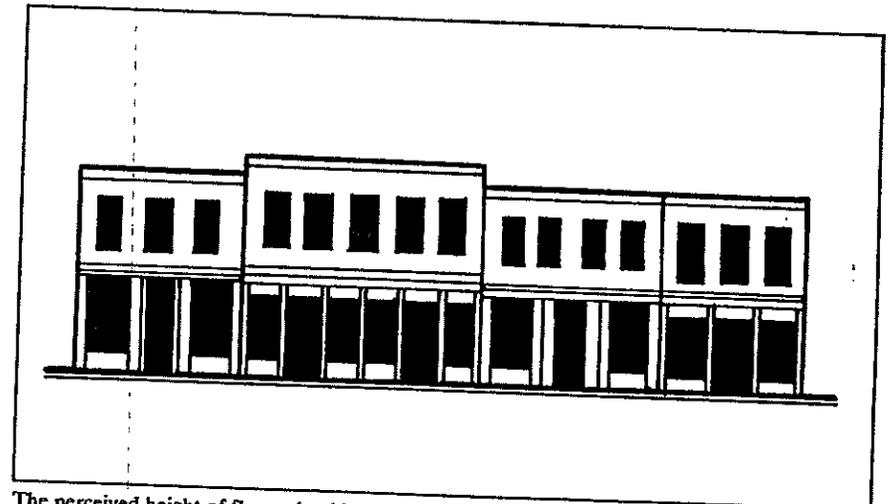
Guideline 6:

The perceived height of floors of new buildings should appear to be similar to that of existing historic buildings in the Commercial Core Neighborhood.

- The first floor should appear to be a full floor in height; any mezzanines must be set back a minimum of 10 feet, such that they do not visually impact the apparent floor height as seen from the street.
- First floor level should be at or near grade level at the entrance, no more than two steps up from the entrance.
- Floors that appear significantly shorter than historic floors are inappropriate.



The uniform heights of buildings in the Core, including these on Main Street, contribute to the visual continuity of the neighborhood.



The perceived height of floors should appear to be similar to that of existing historic buildings in the Commercial Core Neighborhood.

The perceived roof line from the street is flat with a strong cornice or parapet defining the building edge. New structures should not violate this profile nor should rooftop mechanical equipment overwhelm or distort the historic roofscape of the Commercial Core.

Guideline 7:

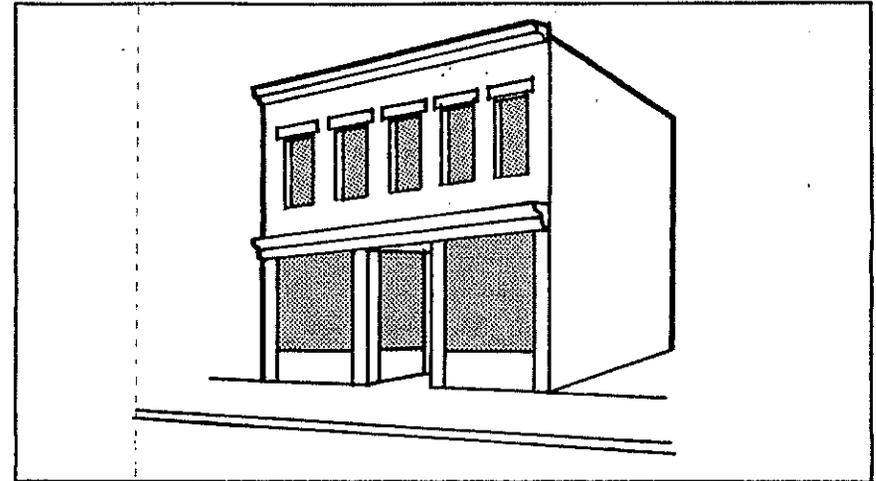
Maintain the appearance of a flat roof as seen from across the street.

- The form of the roof should be similar to those of other structures within the same streetscape.
- A parapet wall continuing the cornice line of neighboring structures is recommended.
- The pitch of the roof is not as important as the edge created by the cornice line as perceived from across the street or from 50 feet.

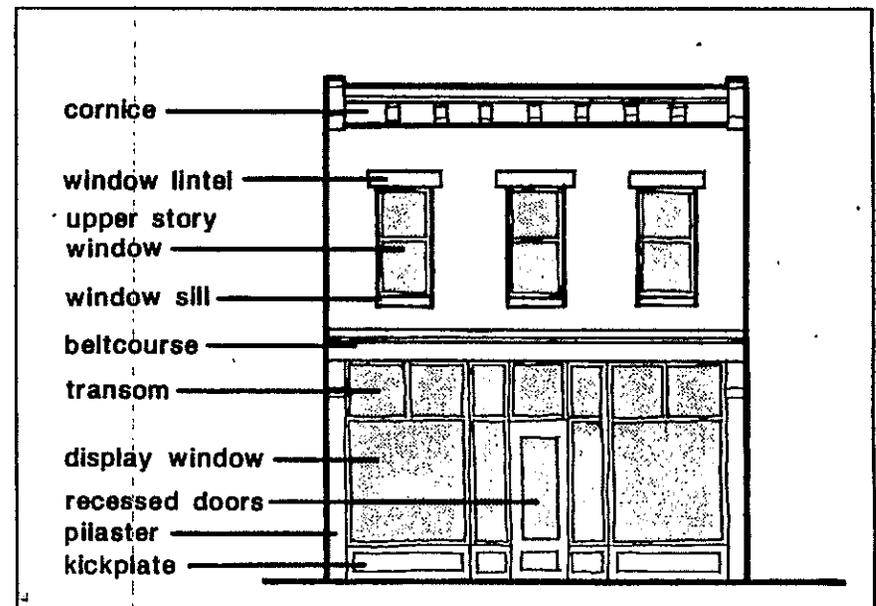
Guideline 8:

Use building components that reinforce the traditional and historical character of the Commercial Core.

- The scale of building components should relate in scale with existing historic building components.
- Subtle distinctions in design are encouraged in the treatment of recessed entries, architectural details and cornices.



Maintain the appearance of a flat roof as seen from across the street.



Use building components that reinforce the traditional and historical character of the Commercial Core.

In the typical building facades, ground-level floors are quite distinct from upper-level floors. Ground-level floors are predominantly glass with a small amount of opaque materials, upper-floors are predominantly opaque with smaller windows appearing as punched openings in the more solid facade. The distinction between upper and lower floors should be perceived.

Guideline 9:

Maintain the characteristic use of large areas of glass/storefronts on the ground level.

- The street floor should be predominantly glass.
- The traditional storefront relationship between the kickplate, display window and transom should be maintained.
- Storefront frame and column material may be painted wood or metal.

Guideline 10:

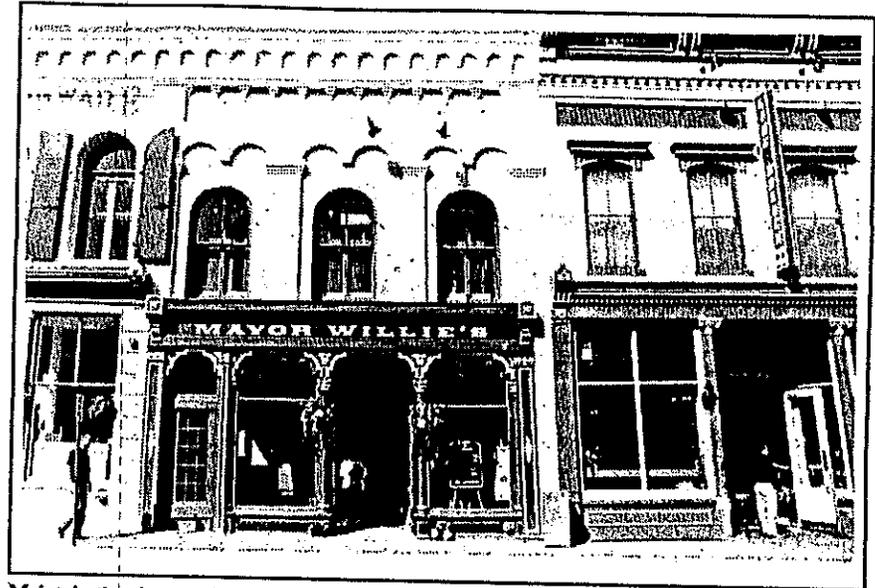
Use kickplates below the display window similar to those seen historically.

- Coordinate the color scheme of the kickplate with other facade elements.
- Appropriate materials are painted wood or painted metal.

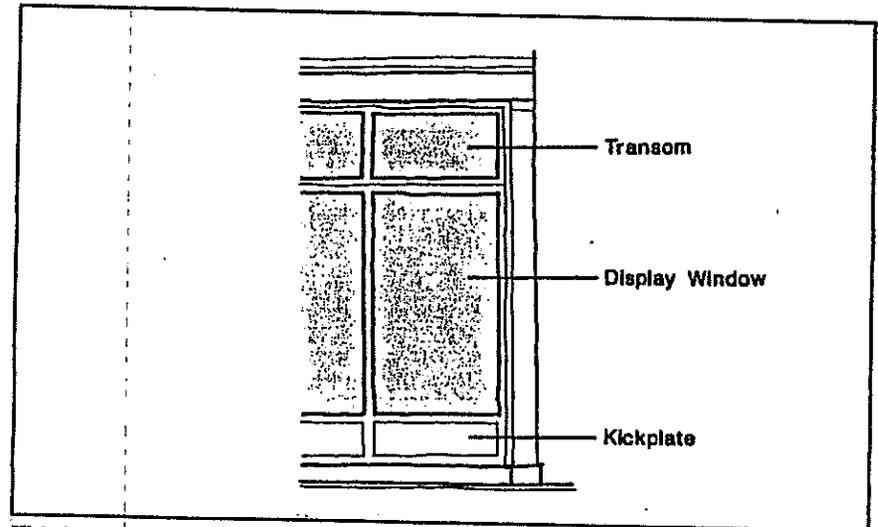
Guideline 11:

Use glass transoms above display windows.

- The upper glass band of traditional storefronts introduced light into the depths of the building, which saved on lighting costs.
- These bands of glass often align at the same height in a block; maintaining this line will help reinforce a sense of visual continuity for the street.
- Where transoms are not proposed, considerations should be made to extend the storefront windows to the entablature between the storefront level and the second level.



Maintain the characteristic use of large areas of glass/storefronts on the ground level.



Kickplates and glass transoms are traditional storefront features used throughout the Commercial Core. Their use should be continued in new construction.

Building entrances are typically recessed, which contributes to a pattern of shaded doorways along the street. These areas provide protection from the weather and the repeated rhythm of these shaded areas along the street helps to identify business entrances. This feature should be preserved.

Guideline 12:

Maintain the pattern created by recessed entry ways.

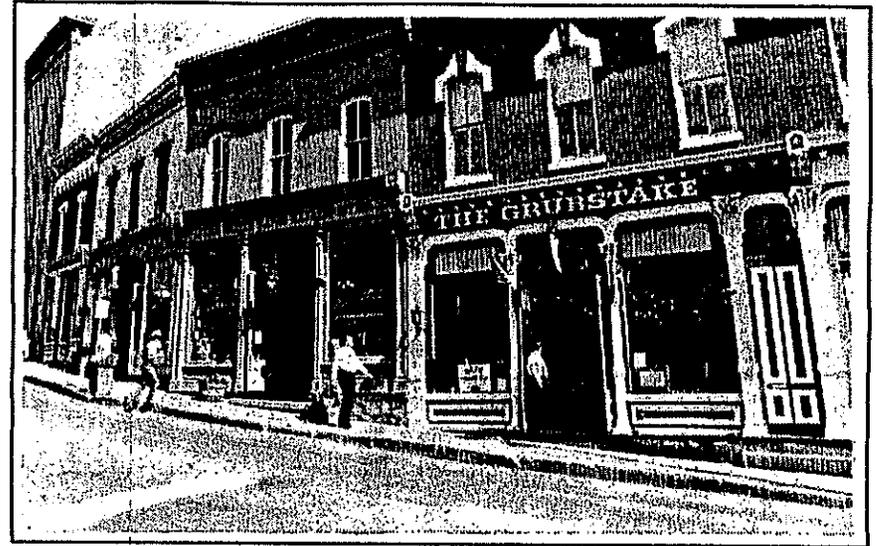
- Avoid doors that are flush with the sidewalk.
- Use doors with large areas of glass.
- The use of an accent color on the door is encouraged; this will help to lead the pedestrian inside.

Much of the visual continuity associated with Central City is due to similar sized windows repeated down the street, creating a uniform rhythm within the District. In the Commercial Core, upper floor windows are vertical in emphasis and equal in size, proportion, and spacing across the facade.

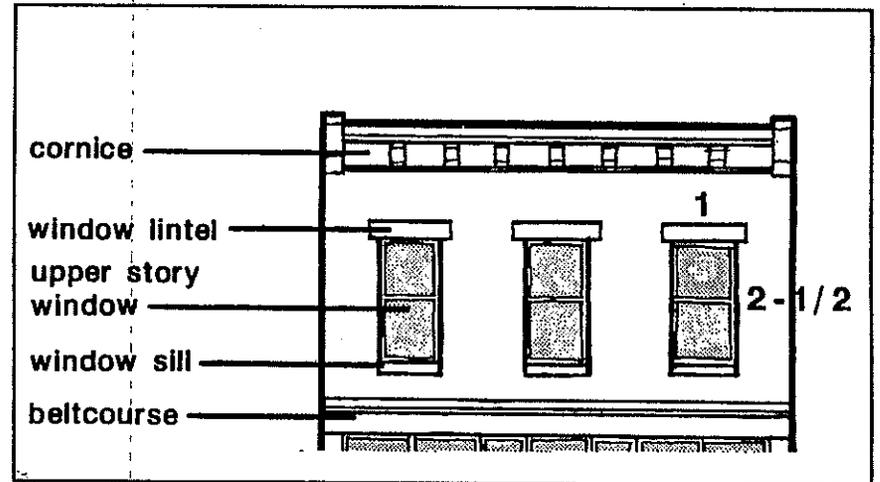
Guideline 13:

Maintain the pattern and alignment created by upper story windows.

- It is particularly important to maintain existing window patterns when renovating.
- The ratio of window width-to-height is approximately 1:2-1/2 for most upper floor windows.



Maintain the pattern created by recessed entry ways.



Upper story windows generally have a 1:2-1/2 ratio.

Guideline 14:

Use solid-to-void ratios that are consistent with those found historically in the Commercial Core.

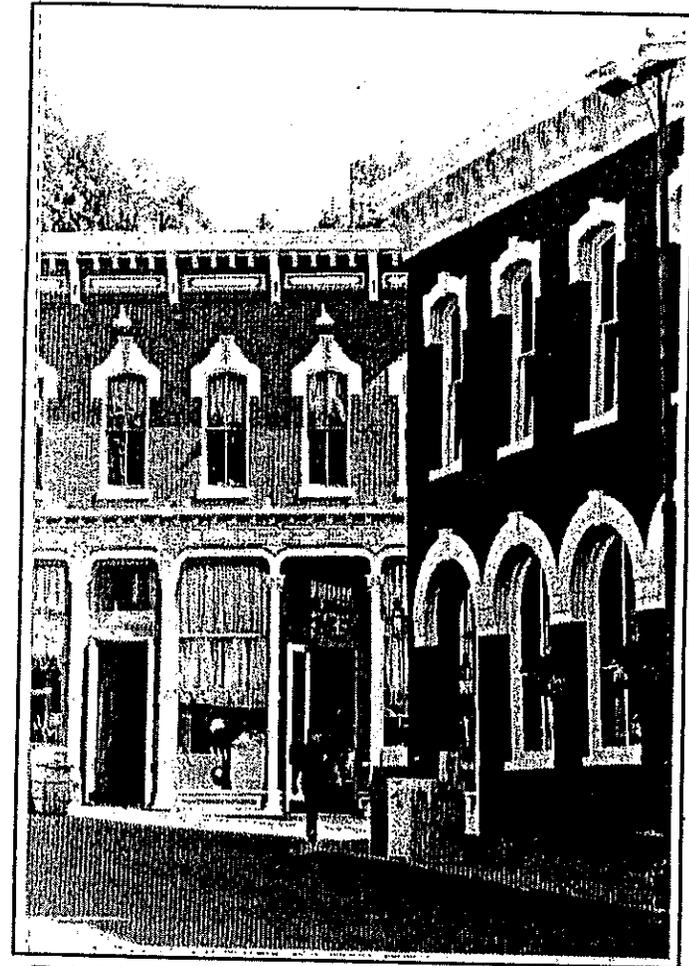
- Upper floors should be perceived as being more opaque than lower floors, with smaller vertically-oriented windows penetrating the facade.
- The ratio of openings (upper-floor windows) should range from 30-40% (see adjacent photo). The ratio of solid surfaces (wall) should range from 60-70%.

Ornamental caps or cornices at the top of the facade are especially encouraged, because they give a "finished" look to the building. When these cornices are repeated along the street, they create an important line that should be reinforced at every opportunity.

Guideline 15:

Repeat or maintain the use of cornices and parapets on the facade.

- Parapets and cornices are examples of decorative elements found on many historic commercial buildings in Central City.
- Consider emphasizing details with accent colors.



The buildings located at the intersection of Main and Eureka Streets use decorative cornices that contribute to the historic character of the City.

Guideline 16:

Moldings should be similar in scale and character to those used historically.

- The entablature molding above the storefronts often align at the same height in a block. Maintaining this line will help to reinforce a sense of visual continuity for the street.
- Others create a "stair-step" line because of the sloping streets. These, too, should be maintained.

When architectural details are used that are similar to those used historically, they should appear to be functional in the same manner in which they were intended. All ornamental details should relate to the scale and character of neighboring historic buildings.

Guideline 17:

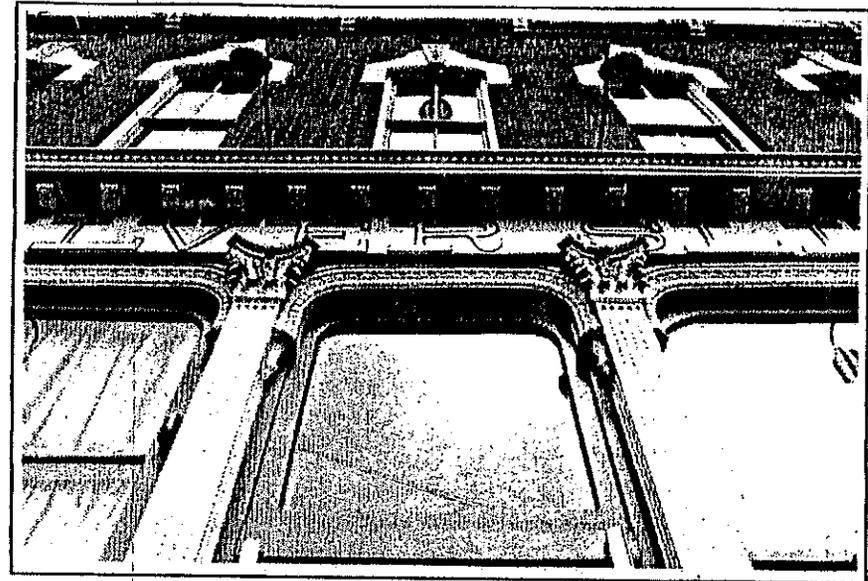
Architectural details and ornamentation should be similar in size, shape and detail to those found historically.

- The amount of architectural details and ornamentation in new construction should be similar to the amount in adjacent historic structures.
- Architectural details and ornament should be based on historic references to a specific style in the Commercial Core's period reflecting its period of significance (from 1874 to 1918).

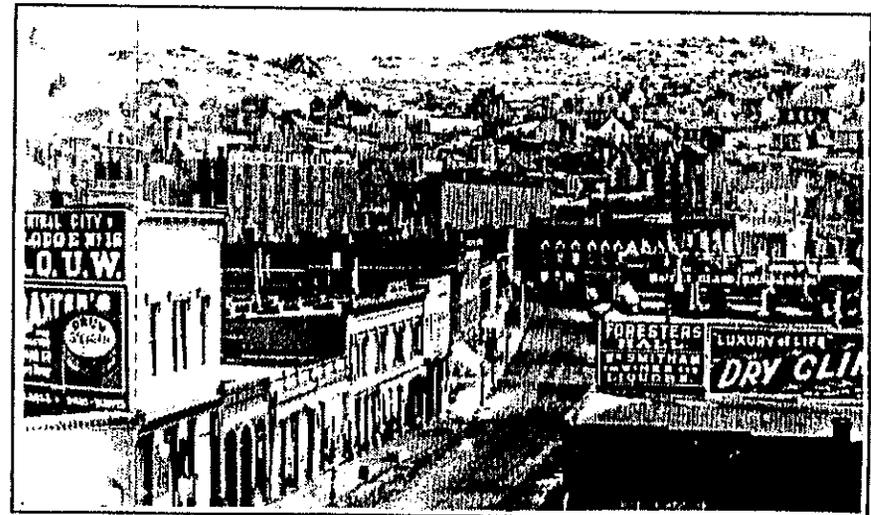
Guideline 18:

Murals and graphics may be developed on blank exterior walls.

- Graphics should be similar to 19th century advertisements once common in Central City (refer to historic photos) and should not advertise or relate to any business or service presently existing in the area.



Architectural ornamentation, such as pilasters with capitals, help to define the character of a building and the neighborhood.



Graphics should be similar to 19th century advertisements once common in Central City, circa 1900. Photo courtesy of Gilpin County Historical Society.

Architectural details such as cornices, entablatures, window patterns, brickwork, etc. should be continued on side elevations of buildings that are visible from the street or an adjacent lot. This enhances the streetscape.

Guideline 19:

Repeat building components found on the front elevation when designing the side elevation of a building that is located adjacent to a through lot.

- Brick and painted wood or metal are appropriate materials.

Often the rear of Commercial Core buildings are plain in appearance and are of a different, more simple material than that of the front facade, especially where those backed against the hillside. Entrances which existed were primarily residential in character and scale.

Guideline 20:

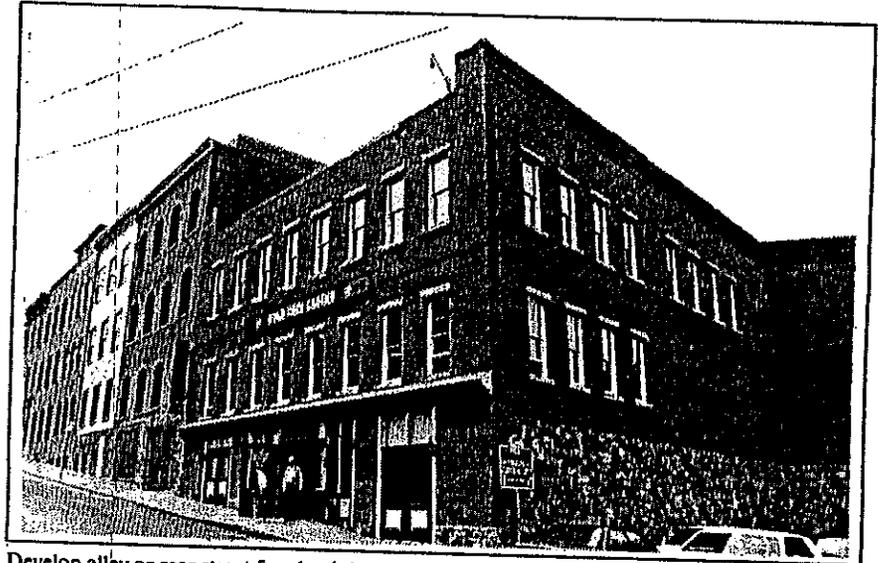
Develop alley or rear street facades (where appropriate) that are plain and simple in appearance and that will maintain the architectural integrity of the primary facade.

- Simple brick work, rubble rock stone, or wood are appropriate materials.

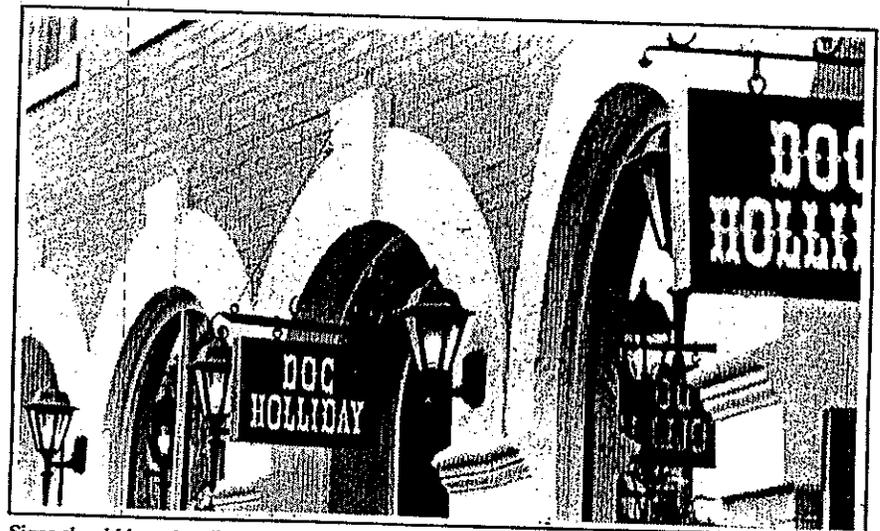
Guideline 21:

Signs should be subordinate to the building facade.

- Particular attention should be paid in the placement of new signs on existing buildings when renovating. The signs should not obscure existing details. It is best to mount them so they fit within "frames" created by the decorations and components of the facade.
- Other types of graphics applied to exterior walls, such as painted decorations and murals, should not obscure building details.



Develop alley or rear street facades (where appropriate) that are plain and simple in appearance and that will maintain the architectural integrity of the primary facade. Photo location: Spring Street.



Signs should be subordinate to the building facade.

Site Design Guidelines

Building fronts create a strong edge to the street because they are aligned on the front property line (that is the facades are not set back). This feature should be preserved.

Guideline 22:

Maintain the alignment of front facades at the sidewalk's edge.

- Align the facade of any new construction with existing structures. This means building to the front property line.

Guideline 23:

Preserve the sense of a built edge along the street by building to the side lot lines when possible.

- New construction should be built to the side edges of the property line wherever possible.
- Any alteration to an existing structure must maintain the common wall with the adjacent structure.
- Where open sites do occur, provide screening, such as a wall or fence, that maintains the edge.



This view of Eureka Street illustrates how historic structures in the Commercial Core were built out to the front and side edges of their property lines.

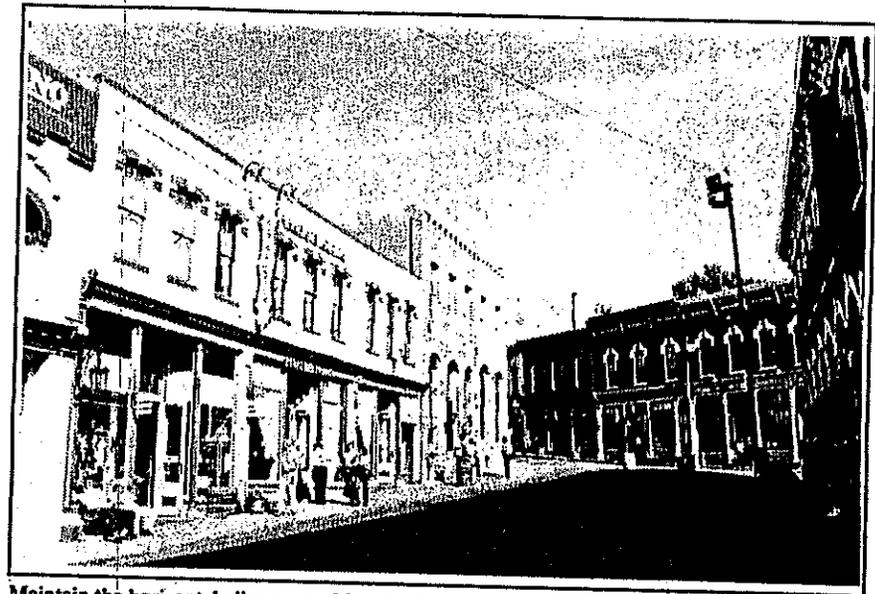
Neighborhood Views and Character Guidelines

The visual impression given by the strong horizontal bands of the storefronts, cornice lines, and upper story windows of the commercial structures is one of the most characteristic and identifiable elements in Central City. It is important these alignments be encouraged and maintained.

Guideline 24:

Maintain the horizontal alignment of facade elements in elevation by the alignment of setbacks, cornices, and facade openings.

- There is a strong horizontal emphasis created by continuous bands of upper story windows, cornice and entablatures and consistent storefront openings.
- The alignment pattern of facade openings in existing structures should not be blocked, covered up, or otherwise disrupted.
- On sloping streets, these elements create a "stair-step" line, which should be maintained.



Maintain the horizontal alignment of facade elements in elevation by the alignment of setbacks, cornices and facade openings.

The consistent height of structures allows for relatively continuous cornice heights when viewing a whole block, and therefore an even "frame" from which to view the mountains or sky above and beyond these structures. This continuous building frame is characteristic of the Commercial Core area and should be encouraged and maintained.

Guideline 25:

Maintain existing view corridors by allowing the height of commercial structures to be of a height similar to adjacent structures.

- Parapet walls and flat cornice lines are required, because they create an important horizontal edge to the view corridor.
- If rooftop mechanical equipment is required, it may be integrated into the structure of the building so that the image of a flat roof-line is maintained.
- See also the guidelines for views in Chapter 1, "General Design Guidelines."



The consistent height of commercial structures in the core area allows for optimum views to the surrounding hills.