

**DESIGN STANDARDS FOR THE HISTORIC DISTRICT
CHARACTER AREA #6:
Core Commercial**



BRECKENRIDGE, COLORADO
December 1991

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------|----|
| Location Description | 1 | Parking | 7 |
| Character of Historic Development | 1 | Facade Alignment | 8 |
| Existing Character | 2 | Building Height | 8 |
| Pedestrian Orientation | 3 | Store Front Design | 9 |
| Trends | 4 | Upper Story Windows | 10 |
| Historic Preservation Issues | 4 | Building Entrances | 11 |
| Design Goal | 4 | Building Materials | 12 |
| Standards: | | Color | 13 |
| Pedestrian Orientation | 5 | Ornament and Detail | 13 |
| Building Fronts | 5 | Signs | 14 |
| Form and Shape | 6 | Rear Facades | 15 |
| Landscaping | 6 | Outbuildings | 16 |

NOTE:

A **P** symbol adjacent to a design standard indicates that it is a "Priority" that must be met in order to be in "substantial compliance" with the guidelines, under policy 5A of the town's Development Code.

CREDITS

TOWN OF BRECKENRIDGE

Town Council

Steve West, Mayor
Ken Adams
Michael Bertaux
John Gain
Judy Girvin
Darcy Lystlund
Sandy Struve

Planning Commission *

Darcy Lystlund
Wayne Brown
Larry Crispell
Fred Kinat
Sam Mamula
Grant Miller
Dave Pringle
Sandy Struve

** includes members from the 1990/91 and the 1991/92 terms*

Summit Historical Society

Rebecca Waugh, Director

Community Development Department

John Humphreys, Past Director
Peter Grosshuesch, Present Director
Jan Prowell
Bob Matatall
Don Seten
Mary Holden
Ginny Nielsen

CONSULTANT

Winter & Company

Boulder, Colorado
303 440-8445

Noré V. Winter
Ray Kramer, A.I.A.
Molly Miller Winter

Historic photographs are provided courtesy of the Summit Historical Society and the Colorado Historical Society.

#6. Core Commercial Character Area

Note: The special design standards presented here for the Core Commercial Character Area apply in addition to the general standards on pages 19 through 26 of the main book of standards for all of the historic district.

Note: These design standards apply to all new construction and major alterations or additions to existing buildings. For minor rehabilitation projects in the Core Commercial Character Area, see the general design standards for the rehabilitation of historic buildings on page 27 of the Design Standards book.

Location description

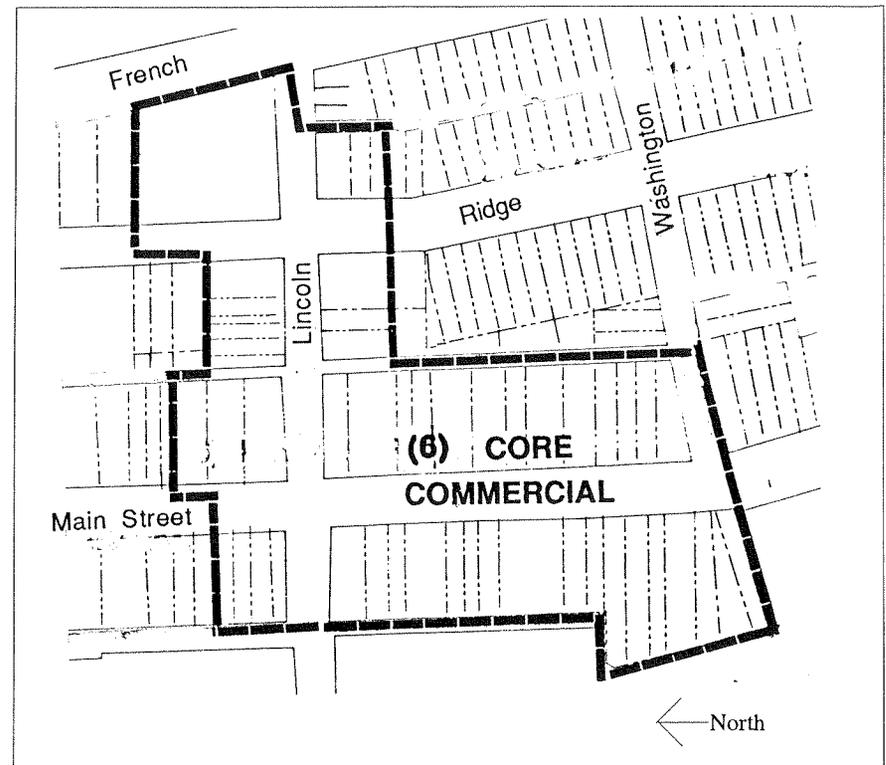
The Core Commercial character area is the heart of downtown Breckenridge. It includes both sides of Main Street, from just north of Lincoln Avenue south to Washington Avenue, as well as portions of Lincoln Avenue, from Main to French Street.

Character of historic development

This area was visually very cohesive in its early years. It began to emerge as the commercial core early in the town's history between the 1860s and 1870s. It experienced an intense building period between 1882 and 1913; most of the historic buildings surviving today are from this period. The west side of the street developed first: At the time, the east side was actually a drainage channel and buildings fronted onto it with Main Street serving as a road along the water's edge. A few years later, the drainage was diverted, thus freeing up land for development on the east side of Main.

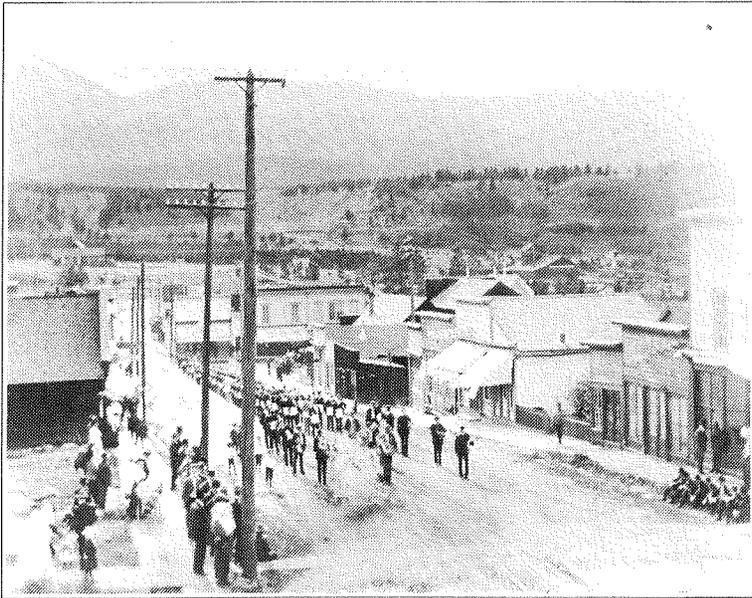
Much of downtown, including a portion of the commercial core, was destroyed by fire in the 1800s, which provided redevelopment opportunities. Some historic buildings date from this period of rebuilding. Other sites remained vacant until the ski area development period.

Structures were built to the sidewalk edge establishing a strong "building wall" along the street. Each structure was usually built to less than a full 50-foot lot width, to allow a side access stair to second story residential units. Side yard gaps developed between many buildings as a result of these stairway accesses. The site was not fully covered in the rear,



The boundary of the Core Commercial Character Area.

#6. Core Commercial



Many false-fronted buildings align at the sidewalk edge in this 1904 view of Lincoln (looking west to Main Street).



This early photo of Main Street shows a variety of canopies and awnings that helped shelter the sidewalk.

however, and rear yards were common, often accommodating many service functions. Many rear yards had sheds located behind the primary commercial building.

Two-story, false-fronted commercial buildings were dominant during this historic period. In many cases, the upper levels were for office and residential uses. Building fronts featured large display windows on the first floor, directly abutting the edge of the sidewalk. This established a close relationship between business activities and pedestrians. Upper floors frequently had windows on side elevations for these residential units; this especially occurred where a vacant lot was adjacent to the structure.

A variety of roof lines were seen: Flat-corniced false fronts frequently occurred, while some carried arched and pedimented parapets. Other roofs were gabled, usually with the ridge arranged perpendicular to the street. Early photos also show some gables running parallel to street, however.

Additions typically were found on the back side of the main buildings. These usually had shed roofs and stepped down in scale from the main structure. Other free-standing secondary structures were located in the rear. These included stables, out-houses, storage sheds, and barns.

The sidewalk was often sheltered. Many commercial structures had canopies, some of which were fabric and sloped to the street. Others had shed roofs. Sidewalks, made of wooden boardwalks, were provided in this area. Signs added vitality to the commercial scene, with many businesses advertising their goods and services with freestanding signs. These often included symbols to represent products.

Existing character

Today, this section of Main Street retains a flamboyance depicted in early historic photos. It displays a combination of new (brick and wood) structures mixed in among historic buildings. Almost all of these buildings are commercial uses. Many include design characteristics of the historic buildings. Others contrast strongly with the traditional commercial store front format.

Landscape and site design

Many of the Main Street store fronts, including both historic and contemporary buildings, align in the traditional arrangement at the sidewalk edge. Several contrasting examples exist of newer structures set back from the sidewalk with sunken plazas which separate the store front windows from the sidewalk.

Perhaps one of the most significant images of historic character that survives is the uniform rhythm of store fronts, which results from most building fronts being built in twenty-five foot modules. This pattern of building fronts is especially important.

Building details

Most buildings have large display windows at the ground level. Upper floors are typically more solid and have smaller window openings (although several more recent buildings deviate from this characteristic).

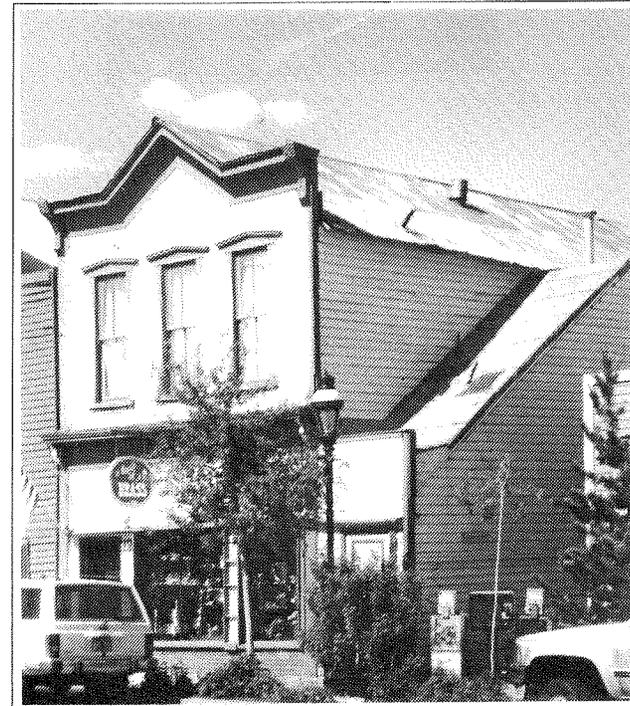
A wide variety of building ornamentation is found. These include brackets, decorative window surrounds and ornamental cornices. Moldings and cornices often appear aligned along the street because they are built at similar heights above the sidewalk.

Some newer buildings include attempts to relate to the river side of property, with windows and public entrances facing to the rear as well as Main Street. These have introduced “flow through” circulation to the street.

Pedestrian orientation

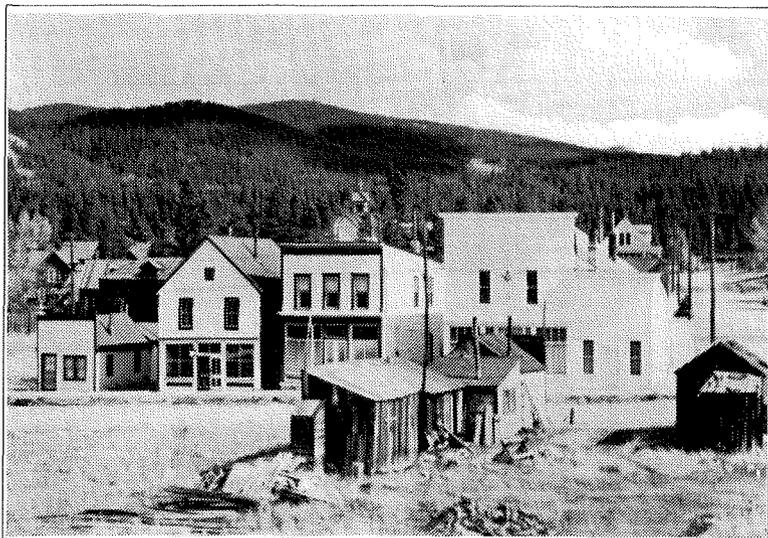
Downtown contains a mix of uses, including retail businesses, eating and drinking establishments, professional offices and entertainment places. People access these uses through a variety of circulation modes, including automobiles, buses, bicycles and on foot. The downtown experience is best where there is a strong sense of pedestrian scale.

One important consideration of “pedestrian scale” is the orientation of store fronts to the street. Store fronts with large areas of glass, and which are aligned at the sidewalk edge, are appealing to pedestrians and promote window shopping. The display of goods and the visibility of interesting activities add excitement to the walking experience. These



Historically, most buildings had large display windows at the ground level and upper floors were more solid, with smaller openings.

#6. Core Commercial



This row of buildings was photographed in ca. 1914 and survives virtually intact. The same context is shown in more recent photos on the next page.

features also contribute to a sense of pedestrian scale. This characteristic is typical of the Core Commercial Area.

Trends

Pedestrian traffic continues to increase downtown as more goods and services are offered and as visitor populations grow. This means building and streetscape designs that invite pedestrian activity will become increasingly important. However, building designs have not always maximized pedestrian-interesting aspects. In some cases, large wall surfaces remain blank, thereby reducing pedestrian interest.

In other situations, store fronts have been setback significantly from the sidewalk edge which has weakened the connection between pedestrians and window displays. This is especially evident on some recent two-story retail commercial buildings along Main Street where the building front is set back from the sidewalk. In these particular cases, each story is separated from the sidewalk grade by a half level. This trend of split level store fronts has diminished the sense of pedestrian scale in downtown Breckenridge, especially in the core area along Main Street and is inappropriate.

Historic preservation issues

The number of historic structures that survive, in proportion to the new development, is relatively small in this area. Those that do remain are especially significant to interpreting the history of Breckenridge and should be carefully preserved.

Many of these buildings are virtually in their original condition. Others have slight modifications that are reversible. The potential to restore these buildings to their original character is therefore very real. How new buildings may affect our interpretation of the character of these historic structures is also a special concern.

Design goal for the Core Commercial Character Area

The design goals for the Core Commercial Character Area are to preserve the historic resources found there, establish a visual context that is compatible with these older buildings, and to enhance the pedestrian-friendly atmosphere found there.

Conceptual standards for the Main Street Commercial Area follow:

Pedestrian Orientation

Policy:

As the retail center in a resort setting, the downtown should be predominantly pedestrian-oriented, while also accommodating other modes of circulation.

Design Standard:

P 209. **Enhance the pedestrian-orientation of the Main Street Commercial Character Area in all development.**

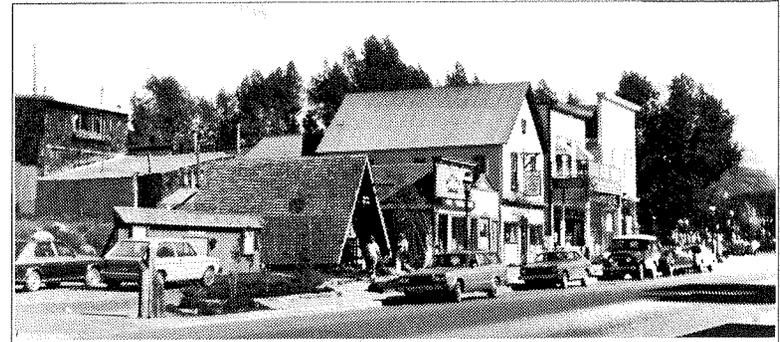
- Use these techniques to contribute to a sense of pedestrian scale and provide visual interest:
 - Create paths through sites that allow pedestrians to filter onto Main Street from adjoining areas
 - Provide sitting areas and nooks to encourage leisurely enjoyment of the street
 - Create pedestrian-scaled signs that can be read by passers-by
 - Provide interpretive markers that explain the historic and natural resources of the area to pedestrians
 - Sponsor public art installations that add accent to the street
 - Create areas of landscaping using materials that encourage pedestrian use.

Building Fronts

Design Standard:

P 210. **Develop building fronts that reinforce the pedestrian-friendly character of the area.**

- Avoid large blank wall surfaces that diminish pedestrian interest.
- Split level entries at elevations other than sidewalk grade are inappropriate.
- Where store fronts are not feasible, use other visually interesting architectural decoration or landscaping treatment to provide interest.



The context for the row above changed in the early period of resort development. Note the "chalet" design in this 1978 photo. See below for this same scene in 1991.



This photo, taken in 1991, documents the changes that have occurred since 1978 (the photo above). Historic buildings have been preserved. New buildings have store fronts that enhance pedestrian interest.



Develop building fronts that reinforce the pedestrian-friendly character of the area.

Form and Shape

Policy:

New buildings should reinforce the perception of the historic forms and shapes of the area. In terms of building form, the Main Street Commercial Character Area is characterized by simple rectangular shapes which present a rectangular building profile to the street. Sloped gable roofs hidden from the street by flat parapets and false fronts are also integral design elements along Main Street.

Design Standards:

- P 211. Use building forms similar to those found historically in the area.**
- Use simple building forms, especially rectangular ones oriented with the narrow side parallel to the street.
 - Keep components of individual building elements in scale with those found historically.
- P 212. Use simple roof forms similar to those of historic buildings in the area.**
- Gable roof forms with false fronts are preferred.

Landscaping

Policy:

Landscape elements should contribute to the visual continuity of the area by repeating similar materials along the street. The overall image should be more "urban" in the Core Commercial Character Area.

Design Standards:

- 213. Street plantings in the public right of way shall comply with the Downtown Urban Design Plan.**

214. Street plantings within the property line shall comply with the plant and material list defined in the landscaping ordinance.

- Use native plants for large areas of plantings.
- Reserve exotic plantings for limited accents.

Parking

Policy:

Automobile parking is a newer feature in the district, and by its nature it is hard to assimilate into the historic context without altering the character of the streetscape. The impact of automobiles on the general character of the historic district should be minimized. The town assumes that most future parking will be provided in public facilities created as a part of a parking district. However, there may be selected situations where parking is provided as a part of a development. Off-street public parking should not be visually obtrusive in the area and it should not be visible from Main Street in this area.

Design Standards:

215. Design off-street parking lots to minimize their visual impact on the historic character of the district.

- Use paving designs that will encourage pedestrian use.
- Screen service equipment where feasible. (See guidelines for out-buildings.)
- Buffer the edges of parking lots with landscaping.

216. Where parking is to be provided on site, locate it to the rear of buildings.

- Use of shared parking facilities, such as public parking lots, is encouraged. However, these facilities should not significantly alter the visual character of the district. Rather, they should enhance the character of the area as much as possible.

#6. Core Commercial



This 1926 photo of Main Street demonstrates that the alignment of building fronts at the sidewalk edge was an early characteristic. Store front heights were also similar and appeared to align.



Building heights should step down to the rear of properties to retain the lower scale that is traditional on alleys.

Facade Alignment

Policy:

Store fronts should align with the sidewalk edge in the Main Street Core Commercial Character Area.

Design Standard:

- P 217. Maintain the alignment of building fronts at the sidewalk edge.**

Policy:

The significant factor is that there is a strong alignment of horizontal elements. This alignment occurs at the first floor with the alignment of window moldings, and at the upper levels with the alignment of cornices.

Design Standard:

- P 218. Maintain the alignment created by window moldings, tops of display windows, cornices and the general similarity of building heights.**

Building Height

The street is perceived as two stories, although there are some one-story buildings. Building heights are limited to 30 feet. Present regulations stipulate that the building height limit may not be exceeded by either the original or final grade.

- P 219. Maintain the similarity of historic building heights as seen at the sidewalk edge.**

- If an allowed building height would be higher than nearby historic structures, set back the taller portion to the middle of the lot.
- Building heights should step down to the rear of properties to retain the lower scale that is traditional on alleys.

Store Front Design

Policy:

The historically strong connection between store fronts and sidewalks should be preserved in both rehabilitation and new construction. Split levels and blank walls that diminish the sense of pedestrian scale should be avoided. The street floor should be predominantly glass. Upper floors should be perceived as being more opaque than the lower floors. Store fronts were typically 25 feet wide, although fronts of greater and lesser dimensions did occur. Historic buildings survive in widths ranging from 16 to 40 feet.

Design Standards:

P 220. **Maintain the clear distinction between first and upper floors.**

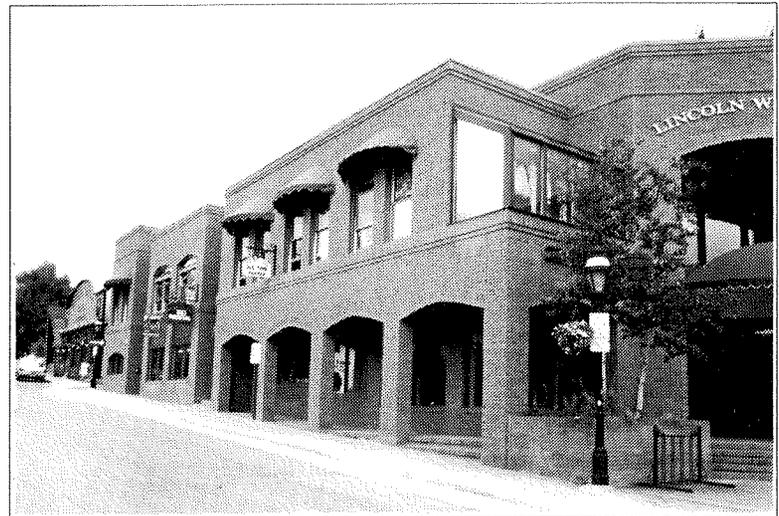
- First floors should be predominantly glass with a smaller percentage of opaque materials.
- First floors should include the traditional kick plate, columns or pilasters, and sign bands.
- Upper floors should be the reverse; opaque materials should dominate, windows should be smaller, more vertically-oriented openings that appear to puncture the more solid wall plane.
- Use of horizontal moldings, awnings, and sign bands to emphasize this distinction should be considered.
- Note that this means that using large expanses of glass on the upper floor of a commercial building is inappropriate because doing so would blur the distinction between upper and lower floors.

221. **Express the rhythm established by typical twenty-five foot lots.**

- Using the typical 25 foot width is encouraged, although some variation in dimension may occur.
- Aggregating lots into parcels greater than 50 feet wide is especially discouraged.



First floors should be predominantly glass; upper floors should be the reverse.



Larger buildings can be visually articulated to express the rhythm established by 25 foot lots.

Upper Story Windows

Policy:

New buildings should reinforce the alignment of upper story windows found among many of the historic structures in the core area. This contributes to an appropriate sense of scale and establishes a visual relatedness among buildings.

Design Standard:



222. Maintain the alignment of upper story windows.

- This is one of the strongest devices for establishing visual unity to a block and should be followed wherever feasible.

Policy:

New buildings should reinforce the patterns found within the block in which they are proposed, and should specifically respond to those patterns established by historic buildings. A particularly significant pattern that should be enhanced is the rhythm of upper story windows found among some buildings on Main Street.

Design Standard:

223. Maintain the pattern created by upper story windows.

- The shapes of upper level windows repeat, forming a pattern continued throughout the block.
- Windows of a similar size and shape to those found historically should be used, and other facade elements that establish the same sort of pattern should be incorporated.

Design standards for more detailed design considerations follow:

Building Entrances

Policy:

Most entrances to buildings are recessed, and doors are topped with transom windows. These shadowed areas create a distinct rhythm along the street that helps identify building entrances to pedestrians. This pattern should be enhanced in all development.

Design Standard:

224. Maintain the rhythm of recessed entrances that face the street.

- The pattern of recessed entrances is especially important on Main Street. The perception of this pattern is lost when the primary facade is set back from the sidewalk edge or when doors are set flush with the building front.
- Locate doors in recessed entryways to reinforce this rhythm of entrances along the street.
- Establish one primary entrance for each 25 foot module.



The recessed entrance arrangement and use of painted clapboard siding are traditional characteristics that should be continued in new construction. (Note the historic context of this building as seen on page 8 where a rhythm of recessed entries is clearly expressed.)

Building Materials

Policy:

The historic district should be perceived as a collection of wooden structures. A strong uniformity in building materials is seen in the area. Most structures, both historic and more contemporary, have horizontal lap siding. This material is usually painted. Few brick commercial buildings existed in this area historically. This uniformity of materials should be respected.

Design Standard:

225. Maintain the present balance of building materials found in the Core Commercial Character Area.

- Use painted wood lap siding as the primary building material. An exposed lap dimension of approximately 4 inches is appropriate. This helps establish a sense of scale for buildings similar to that found historically.
- Contemporary interpretations of these historically-compatible materials are discouraged. Wood imitation products are discouraged as primary façade materials because they often fail to age well in the Breckenridge climate.
- Modular panel materials are inappropriate.
- Masonry (brick or stone) may only be considered as an accent material. Stone indigenous to the mountains around Breckenridge may be considered.
- Logs are discouraged.
- Rough-sawn, stained or unfinished siding materials are inappropriate on primary structures.

Color

Policy:

Colors should be muted and should contribute to a sense of visual continuity on the street.

Design Standard:

226. Use muted colors, commonly found during the period of historical significance, for dominant building surfaces, as defined in the town's color ordinance.

227. Coordinate color schemes with other appropriate color schemes on the block that comply with the town's color regulations.



Contemporary interpretations of traditional details may be considered.

Ornament and Detail

Policy:

Building details that receive the most attention by the public and enhance a sense of a pedestrian-friendly environment are those that literally can be touched, such as door handles and display window trim. This is where the quality of design and construction should be highest. A distinct repetition of similar facade elements is an important characteristic of the street that should be reinforced.

Design Standards:

228. Use ornament and detail that will reinforce the established pedestrian character of the area.

- In particular, windows, details, ornaments and cornice moldings reoccur frequently and are encouraged to enhance visual interest.

229. Maintain the alignment of decorative horizontal features along the block.

- Aligning horizontal features, such as window sills, store front moldings and upper parapets is especially important in the commercial core.
- In order to do so, the facade must also maintain the alignment in plan of traditional building fronts. That is to say that a building which is set back from the street will not reinforce this traditional horizontal alignment.

Signs

Design Standard:

230. Design signs to be subordinate to the overall façade composition.

- Signs should not obscure existing details.
- It is best to mount them so they fit within “frames” created by the ornamentations and components of the façade.
- Other graphics applied to exterior walls, such as painted decorations and murals, should not obscure building details.
- See the special section on sign design and in sign code.

Rear Façades

Policy:

Historically, rear entrances were for utilitarian use, and their design reflected this fact. Openings were smaller; residential scale doors and windows were frequently used. Materials often had a more rustic appearance. Today, rear entrances may serve a combination of functions, particularly public access to and from off-street parking facilities. As the use of rear entries increases, the design of rear façades will become more important. This is especially true along the Blue River where the town is implementing public improvements that will attract more people to this alley.

The town wishes to encourage the use of alleys for a variety of functions and therefore developing commercial access along alleys may be considered. However, the design character of the rear façades should express the simpler, more utilitarian historic character of these alleys. These façades should be subordinate to Main Street fronts and should have a neat, simple character.

Design Standards:

231. Express the simple, utilitarian character of alleys in the design of rear façades.

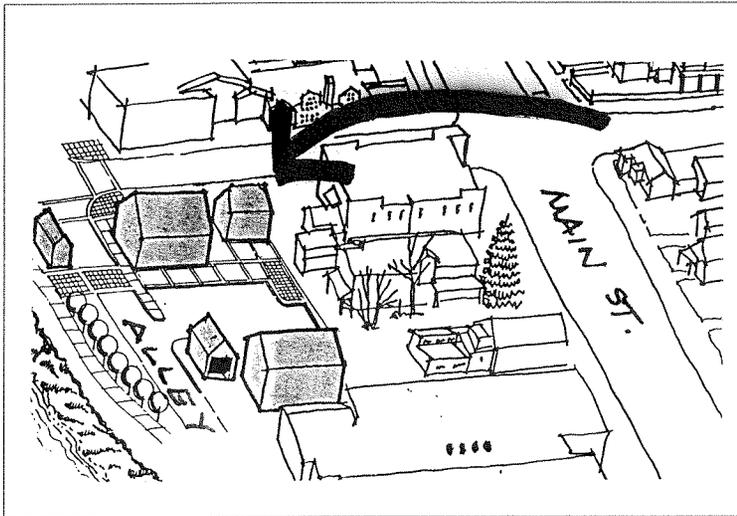
232. Use smaller, vertically-oriented windows, similar to those found historically, on back sides of buildings.

233. Maintain the simple character of alley façade materials.

- Simple painted lap siding is preferred.
- Stained wood siding may be considered.



Express the simple, utilitarian character of alleys in the design of rear façades.



Use secondary structures in new development to help reduce the scale of the building.

Outbuildings

Smaller outbuildings, usually located to the rear of the main structure, are seen on many lots. The scale of the primary structure is established by contrast with these smaller structures. The supporting structures are important features of the historic district and contribute to the sense of historic character.

Policy:

Barns, storage sheds, and outhouses are typical building types that were part of the scene in historic Breckenridge. These structures served practical functions essential to daily life in the community. Where historic sheds survive, they help to convey this sense of character and help demonstrate how life was lived in earlier days. This tradition of developing a site with a complex of buildings should be continued in new construction. Providing new uses in smaller outbuildings is especially encouraged along the Blue River, where the town is completing its river walk system.

Design Standard:

234. Use secondary structures in new development where feasible.

- Housing utilitarian functions, such as parking, storage, and waste receptacles, in secondary structures is encouraged.
- Using secondary structures will help reduce the perceived scale of the development by dividing the total floor area into a cluster of smaller structures rather than one large building.
- Use simple building forms and materials for these structures.