

# DESIGN STANDARDS FOR THE HISTORIC DISTRICT CHARACTER AREA #4: North Main Residential



BRECKENRIDGE, COLORADO

December 1991

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**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

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## *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.*

## **#4. North Main Street Residential Character Area**

*Note: The special design standards presented here for the North Main Street Residential 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.*

### **Location Description**

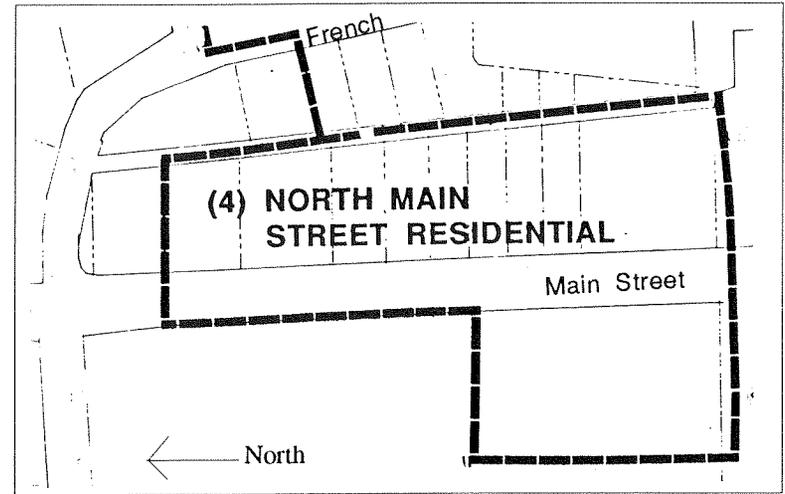
The North Main Street Residential Character Area lies along Main Street, with the east boundary running along the alley between French and Main Streets. Watson Street comprises the southern boundary. The character area is further bounded by the Blue River to the west and to the north by the southern lot lines of properties lying just to the south of the intersection of French Street and Main.

### **Character of historic development**

The North Main Street area experienced its earliest development period from 1880 to 1898. Uses were primarily residential and structures were distributed in a sparse pattern. Although log structures were found, most were wood clapboard sided. Building heights of one or one-and-a-half stories were typical. Smooth-sawn, wood shingles were used on many roofs; some had corrugated tin metal roofs. Gabled roof forms were typical. Their ridge lines were usually perpendicular to the street. The main houses usually had painted finishes, while more utilitarian out-buildings often remained unpainted. Early photographs show large yards, some with rather refined front lawns. Landscaping included wood picket and metal fences. Small flower gardens were also seen.

### **Existing character**

Today, the North Main Street Character Area serves as the primary entry into the historic core of town for travelers arriving from the north. Buildings are a mixture of small, historic houses and a variety of newer commercial and service uses. These include retail, lodging, the fire station, and an information center. Some of these newer buildings have weakened the historic character of the area. New residential buildings are found, as well as some older structures that have been moved into the area in recent years. The overall density remains low in this area as compared with other more southerly portions of Main Street.

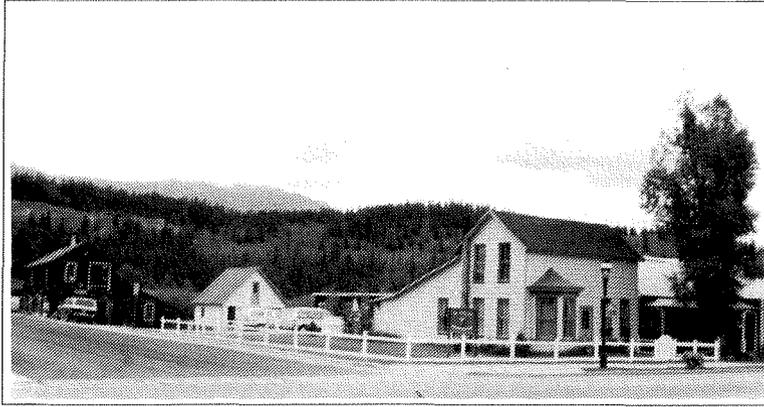


The boundary of the North Main Street Residential Character Area.

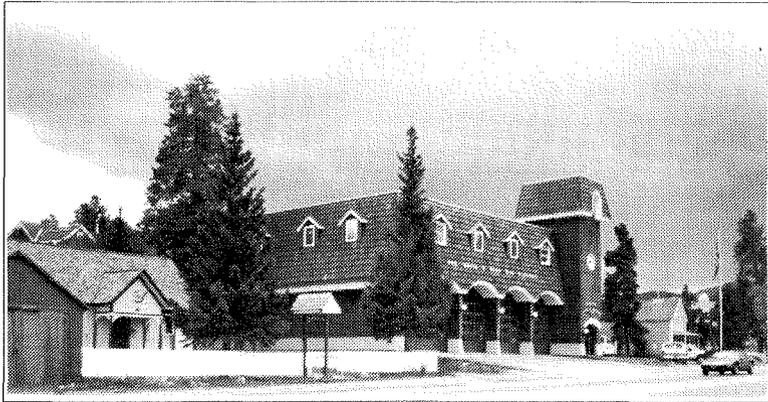


Residential building forms are a part of the traditional character of the North Main Street Residential Character Area

#### #4. North Main Street Residential



Traditionally, functions were divided among several buildings on a site, which established a low scale for the street.



The fire station stands out as a public structure. It is not a model for other "infill" buildings.

#### Landscaping and site design

The historic buildings and relocated houses generally exhibit traditional front and side yards and provide an open feeling. Most buildings are set back from the street 40 to 50 feet from the inside sidewalk edge. However, a greater variety in setbacks is emerging than was seen historically. This recent trend has weakened the visual continuity of the area.

Where buildings have been converted to commercial use, lawns are usually developed for product display. Entrances to older buildings are defined by porches and walkways that lead to the street. Newer buildings tend to deviate from this site arrangement. Some of the recent commercial buildings have front setbacks, greater than those found traditionally. To provide off-street parking, other structures are built to the sidewalk edges.

#### Building form and materials

Older residential structures exhibit a narrow façade to the street. Surviving historic buildings are typically 15 feet in width where the roof ridge is perpendicular to the street, and approximately 24 feet where the ridge is parallel to the street. The predominant building material is painted wood clapboard siding, although some log walls exist. These newer materials have weakened the visual continuity of the area. Although painted clapboard or log walls have been used in recent construction, unpainted, vertical siding and stucco are common finishes. Many of the buildings that were originally residences have been adapted to commercial uses.

The newer buildings also contrast with the older structures in scale. Furthermore, a few of the newer commercial buildings differ significantly in overall building form as compared with their older neighbors. Some are flat-roofed and present long façades to the street. The newer residential and lodging buildings in the area consist of sloping roof forms and other traditional building elements, but they are significantly larger than the historic ones.

The fire station stands out as a unique public structure because it is much larger than most buildings. It has a mansard roof and tower which are atypical forms in Breckenridge. It does not represent a model for other future compatible architecture.

**Building features**

The historic residences found in the North Main Street Residential Character Area exhibit the traditional array of vertically-oriented, double-hung windows, paneled doors, and porch railings. Some decorative wood jig-saw trim is found on a few buildings, but this is quite modest. Architectural details are more prevalent and vary more widely on the newer buildings.

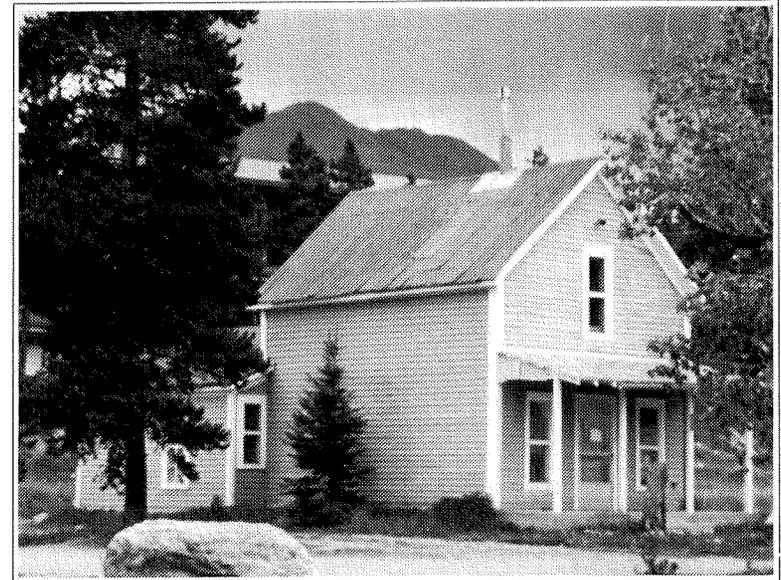
**Historic preservation issues**

Some special historic "jewels" are found along the street in the North Main Street area. Several are small frame houses almost unseen because of large mature trees and substantial landscaping growth that screen them. Smaller buildings are often less visible because they are less commanding in their initial appearance than many of the newer, larger buildings. These smaller historic houses merit special attention and protection.

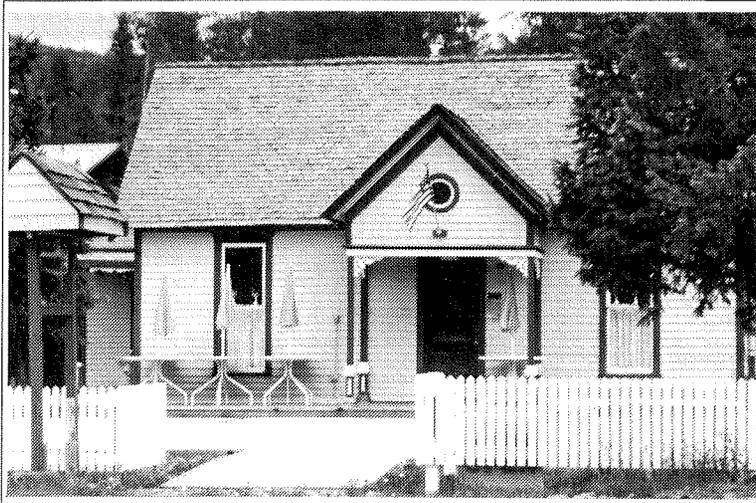
**Design goal for the North Main Street Residential Character Area**

The overall design goal for this area is to strengthen the image of its historic residential character, while accommodating the trend toward commercial uses. In general, buildings should have a residential image, especially in yard treatments.

*Conceptual standards for the North Main Street Residential Character Area follow :*



The traditional combination of vertically-oriented windows and horizontal siding is typical of the North Main Street Area.



Avoid large areas of hard-surface plazas in front yards in the North Main Street area.

## Building Setbacks

### Policy:

New buildings should be set back to align with the fronts of historic houses in the area. This setback is typically the size of a small front yard. Locating a building at the sidewalk line, in a more commercial building format, is inappropriate in this context. Placing a building exceptionally far back on the lot, especially to accommodate driveways and parking in front is also discouraged.

### Design Standard:



#### **174. Reinforce the typical historic setback of buildings and the resulting alignment of facades along the block.**

- This is a very important standard, which must be met.
- No new buildings should project in front of the typical historic setback line for the block.
- The original setback line should be maintained to avoid overwhelming historic structures in the area.
- Hard surface plazas in front of buildings are generally inappropriate because they convey a more urban character than existed historically.
- If one building must be set back farther than the historic alignment, use landscape features such as walls, fences or other screening at the typical setback line to maintain the visual sense of alignment.

### Policy:

The alignment of setbacks of buildings on the west side is reinforced by small front and side yards that may be defined by trees and fences. Houses on the east side have substantial setbacks. New construction should continue this tradition.

Design Standard:

**P 175. Maintain the character of residential yard space through landscaping, especially front and side yards that are visible from the public way.**

- Front yards should be designed predominantly with plant materials, including trees and grass, as opposed to hard surfaced paving.
- Establishing side yards is also important, to avoid “zero lot line” walls with blank surfaces.
- Hard surface plazas and decks in front of buildings are generally inappropriate and are discouraged. However, they may be considered where sufficient plant materials establish clear edges to the yard area and the hard surfaced area appears subordinate to the yard.

Parking

Policy:

Automobile parking is a new use introduced in Breckenridge after the initial periods of historic development. Most automobiles were probably parked in older barns or along the street. Today, cars significantly alter the visual setting. As much as is possible, the visual impact of cars should be minimized, particularly with respect to parking provided on individual building lots. Wherever feasible, front yards should retain a simple, lawn-like image.

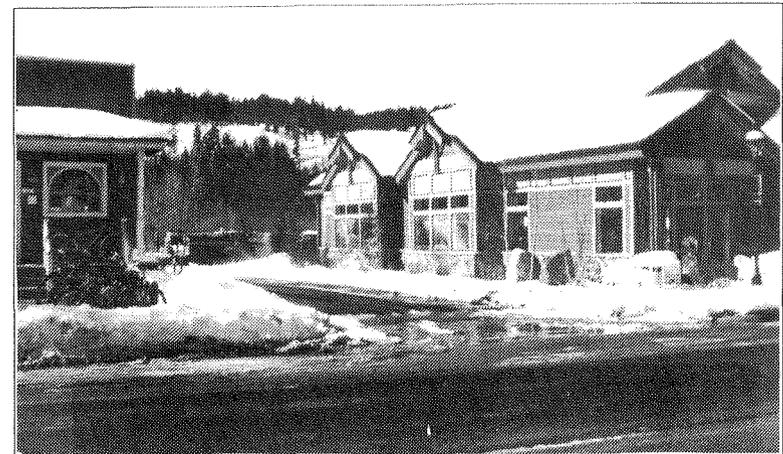
Design Standards:

**176. Minimize the visual impact of parking as seen from the street.**

- Attaching garages to the front of buildings is discouraged. Garages built as smaller, separate secondary structures and located in the rear are preferred.

**177. Develop parking such that the front edge of the site is retained as yard.**

- Avoid locating parking in front yards.
- Use paving designs that will help to retain a yard character and visually separate parking from the street edge.



Locating parking to the rear is encouraged.

## Building Scale

### Policy:

New buildings should appear to be in scale with existing historic and supporting buildings in the area. Typically, historic buildings of between 700 and 1,600 square feet survive today. The average size of representative historic structures surviving today is 1,200 square feet.

### Design Standards:



#### **178. New buildings should be in scale with existing historic and supporting buildings.**

- Development densities of less than nine units per acre are recommended.
- Locating some building area below grade to minimize the mass of structures is encouraged.
- Locate larger masses back from public view.
- Use landscaping, especially large trees, to screen larger building masses.

#### **179. Divide site functions into separate structures to reduce the mass of individual buildings.**

- Providing a garage separate from the main structure is preferred.
- Creating outbuildings to provide additional storage space, rather than increasing the bulk of the main building, is encouraged.

### Form and Shape

**Policy:**

The simple residential-type building forms found historically should be reinforced in new construction.

**Design Standard:**

**P 180. Use building forms similar to those found historically in the area.**

- Simple rectangular buildings, with the gable end facing the street, are encouraged.
- Keep individual building elements in scale with those found historically.

### Building Height

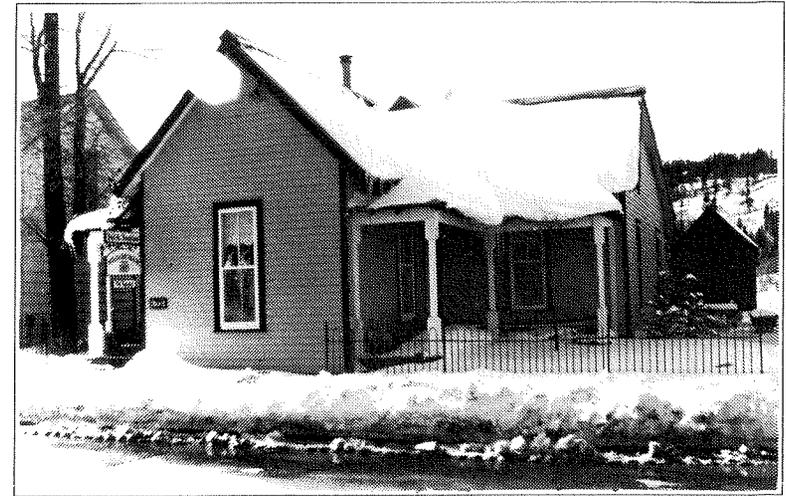
**Policy:**

Similarity in building heights is desired to help reinforce a sense of visual continuity and to respect the sense of character established by the small sizes of original buildings. Building heights for new structures should be similar in scale to those found during the historic period of significance.

**Design Standard:**

**P 181. Building height should be similar to that of nearby historic buildings.**

- Primary facades should be 1 or 1-and-1/2 stories tall.
- Refer to height limits in the Development Code.
- Note that the height limits are absolute maximums and do not imply that all building should reach these limits. What is visually appropriate may be less than the maximum height allowed by ordinance.



Use building forms and materials similar to those used historically. Building height should not exceed 1 and 1/2 stories.

### Façade Widths

Policy:

New buildings should have primary façades similar in dimension to those found historically. Typical building widths of surviving historic buildings range between 13 and 30 feet; the average is 25 feet.

Design Standard:



**182. Reinforce typical narrow front façade widths that are typical of historic buildings in the area.**

- Projects that incorporate no more than 50 feet of lot frontage are preferred.
- The front façade of a building may not exceed 30 feet in width.

### Building Materials

Policy:

The traditional mix of building materials should be retained. The North Main Street Residential Character Area is predominantly clapboard, although some log structures are found. New building materials should appear similar in character to those used on the area's historic structures.

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. A few historic log buildings serve as accents to the lap siding standard. This uniformity of materials should be respected.

Design Standard:

**P 183. Maintain the present balance of building materials found in the 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. The long term durability of siding materials will be considered.
- 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.

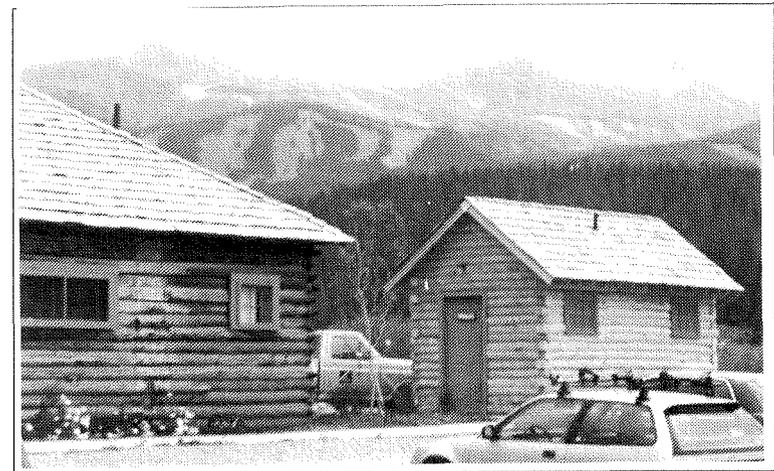
Policy:

Steeply-pitched roofs are the predominant roof style because they serve well to shed snow in this high snow-fall community. Roofing materials have an impact on the overall design and should be compatible in pattern, texture and color with those used historically in the area.

Design Standard:

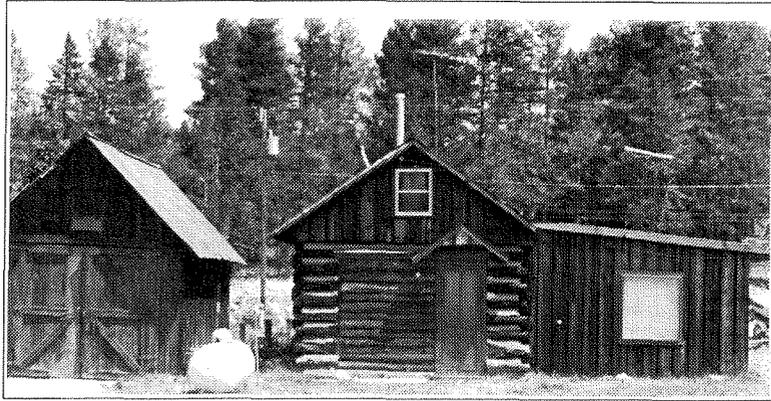
**184. Use roofing materials similar to those found historically.**

- Smooth-sawn wooden shingles and rolled seam sheet metal are appropriate materials. These are encouraged.
- Newer materials, such as asphalt shingles and corrugated metal, may be considered if their appearance will be similar in scale and texture to the historic roofing materials.
- Rough-split shake shingles are discouraged.
- Matte finishes are required to minimize glare from roofs.



This new roof is appropriate in that it is similar to those used historically.

## #4. North Main Street Residential



Use of secondary structures in new development is encouraged.



Outbuildings are a part of Breckenridge's historic character.

### Outbuildings

#### Policy:

Barns, storage sheds, and outhouses are typical building types that are part of Breckenridge's historic scene. These structures served practical functions essential to the community's daily life. Where historic sheds survive, they help to convey this sense of character and help demonstrate how life was lived in earlier days. Historic outbuildings should be preserved. This tradition of developing a site with a complex of buildings should be continued in new construction. Use of outbuildings is especially appropriate along the Blue River, where they help to convey the sense of back yards that once existed. Outbuildings also help to "step down" the scale of development from the street to the river.

#### Design Standard:

#### **185. The use of secondary structures in new development is encouraged.**

- 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.

### Roofs

#### Policy:

Steeply pitched roofs are a distinctive historic characteristic that should be respected. These forms also serve a practical function by facilitating snow shedding.

#### Design Standards:



#### **186. Use roof forms that reflect the angles, scale, and proportions of those of historic buildings in the area.**

- Gable roofs are encouraged; these should have a slope similar to those used historically, which were typically greater than 8 to 12.
- Dormers may be considered. Note that some gable roofs were accented with dormers, but that dormers were used in limited numbers on individual buildings.

*Finally, design standards that address more detailed issues follow:*

Doors and Windows

Policy:  
Vertically-oriented windows are the primary window type both in historic and new buildings. These provide a unifying element throughout the area. Their use should be continued in new construction.

Design Standard:  
**187. Use windows and doors similar in size and shape to those used traditionally.**

- Windows should be similar in size and shape to those used historically.
- Double-hung windows are appropriate.
- Bay windows that are rectangular in plan (not angled) may be considered.
- Doors with transoms are encouraged.

Ornament and Detail

Policy:  
Traditionally, ornament and detail was used sparingly on buildings in the North Main Street Residential Character Area. Many decorative features were modest elaborations of functional elements. Most were wooden elements, typically small in scale and in proportion to the buildings themselves. Simple moldings were used around windows. Decorative shingles were used at times in the gables of dormers, and decorative brackets were applied to porch columns. Where decorative features are used in new construction, they should be applied in a similar spirit.

Design Standard:  
**188. Use ornament and detail with restraint, in keeping with the modest character of the area.**

- Avoid elaborately ornate details that would confuse the genuine history of the area.

#### #4. North Main Street Residential



Design front and side yards to convey a residential character.

#### Plant materials

##### Policy:

Street trees should be encouraged in the area to create a sense of entry into the town core.

##### Design Standard:

#### **189. Install street trees along the outside sidewalk edge.**

- Tree planting should comply with standards of the downtown urban design plan.

##### Policy:

Landscaping front and side yards similar to that which was used historically for residences in the area should be encouraged.

##### Design Standard:

#### **190. Design front and side yards to convey a residential character.**

- Informal planting arrangements are appropriate.
- Flower plantings, especially of perennials defined by rock rings, are historically appropriate.
- Install individual specimen trees within the yard area.
- Include shrubs and ornamental accents to define property edges.