

Municipality of North Perth

Downtown Commercial Design Guidelines

FINAL

2021

Prepared By: Economic Development



Municipality of North Perth
330 Wallace Avenue North
Listowel, ON N4W 1L3
P: 519-291-2950 F: 519-291-1804
www.northperth.ca

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Introduction

The Municipality of North Perth has developed Downtown Commercial Design Guidelines in order to maintain and enhance the built environment in North Perth's downtown commercial areas. Urban design is a tool to create healthy and vibrant communities. This can help foster economic growth as it creates more engaging commercial spaces for residents and visitors. This document offers a vision for our downtown communities based on best practices and a thorough assessment of community needs. Property owners and developers should see this document as an opportunity to create a downtown environment that is unique, cohesive, and impactful.

This document will support the commercial activity within North Perth's downtown communities of Listowel, Atwood, and Monkton. This document offers an overarching vision for North Perth's downtown communities while simultaneously offering flexibility so that the unique characteristics of each downtown community may continue to thrive. Municipal staff will work with property owners on a case-by-case basis, recognising the important context and character that businesses operate in. However, it is expected that property owners and developers adhere to "Main Street" design principles and the following guidelines as much as possible as it will enhance our downtown communities.

There are opportunities for intensification within North Perth's downtown communities, particularly in Atwood, and Monkton. This includes opportunities to development or redevelopment vacant or underutilized sites within the downtown commercial areas. The overall goal here is to encourage a visually interesting and engaging "destination" that reflects North Perth's long and successful tradition of Main Street activity. This document, along with the Municipality of North Perth's Façade Improvement Program, has been made possible by the support of the Listowel BIA as well as OMAFRA Rural Economic Development funding.



Use and Application

The Downtown Commercial Design Guidelines will be applied to the following:

- 1) This document is to be used by developers when planning, designing, or seeking approval on new builds or infill projects in the downtown communities in accordance with Planning Act procedures (i.e. site plans and zoning).
- 2) This document is to be used by property owners applying for the Façade Improvement Program. Property owners must consult these guidelines when developing drawings or plans in order for applications to be eligible for funding.
- 3) This document is to be used by municipal staff when reviewing development applications and when evaluating projects for the Façade Improvement Program.

This document will apply to all commercial and mixed use-properties that fall within the downtown boundaries (see pages 11 – 13). These guidelines are designed to offer flexibility so that the distinct qualities of our commercial cores are not overlooked. These guidelines do not apply as a “checklist” but instead will vary in application on a case-by-case basis. The circumstances relevant to each project and property will be considered.

Within this report, three terms are intended to have the following meanings with respect to compliance. They are:

- May, Encourage, Recommend, Consider: desirable to comply with this statement
- Should: requires a convincing reason in order not to comply
- Must, Shall: mandatory, compliance required

Planning Framework

Planning Act

The Planning Act identifies the following as a matter of provincial interest:

- 2 (r) the promotion of built form that,
 - (i) is well-designed,
 - (ii) encourages a sense of place, and
 - (iii) provides for public spaces that are of high quality, safe, accessible, attractive and vibrant.

Provincial Policy Statement, 2020

Consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 (PPS):

1.7 Long-Term Economic Prosperity

1.7.1 c) maintaining and, where possible, enhancing the vitality and viability of downtowns and mainstreets;

d) encouraging a sense of place, by promoting well-designed built form and cultural planning, and by conserving features that help define character, including built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes;

Municipality of North Perth Strategic Plan, 2019-2022

Goal 4 – Community Development

1) North Perth Is A Progressive And Desirable Community

- (i) Preserve and promote a vibrant and attractive downtown,
- (ii) Promote and maintain the small-town feel and character of North Perth,
- (iii) Support and promote North Perth as a Community of Character.

Background & Context

The Municipality of North Perth was incorporated in 1998. It was formed by the amalgamation of the Town of Listowel, the Township of Elma, and the Township of Wallace. Within these former municipalities are three settlement or “downtown” areas: downtown Listowel, downtown Atwood (located in the former Township of Elma), and downtown Monkton (located in the former Township of Elma).

In 2012, the Municipality approved a Community Improvement Plan with the primary focus of enhancing the quality of these downtown communities. To support this project, the Municipality initiated a Façade Improvement Program in 2021 to provide financial assistance to business owners operating within the downtowns to invest in improvements to their properties. This document is designed to provide a long term vision for North Perth’s downtown communities as it experiences growth, change, and investment.

Main Street Commercial Design

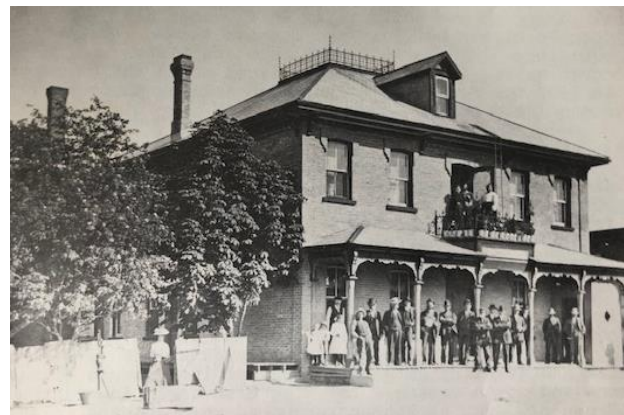
While the downtown communities in North Perth are all unique, the past and present conditions of Listowel, Atwood and Monkton are all that of traditional Main Street communities. Successful Main Streets can be found throughout Southern Ontario. They provide the space and opportunity for commercial activity through architectural features and design. Along a healthy Main Street, one can find a variety of commercial uses, including boutiques, essential services, cafes, restaurants, health services, and cultural services. These forms of downtown communities contribute to a meaningful “sense of place” that can increase pedestrian activity and the quality of life. The Municipality of North Perth aims to support the diverse activity along our Main Streets by ensuring that our commercial activity is both architecturally unified and individually unique.



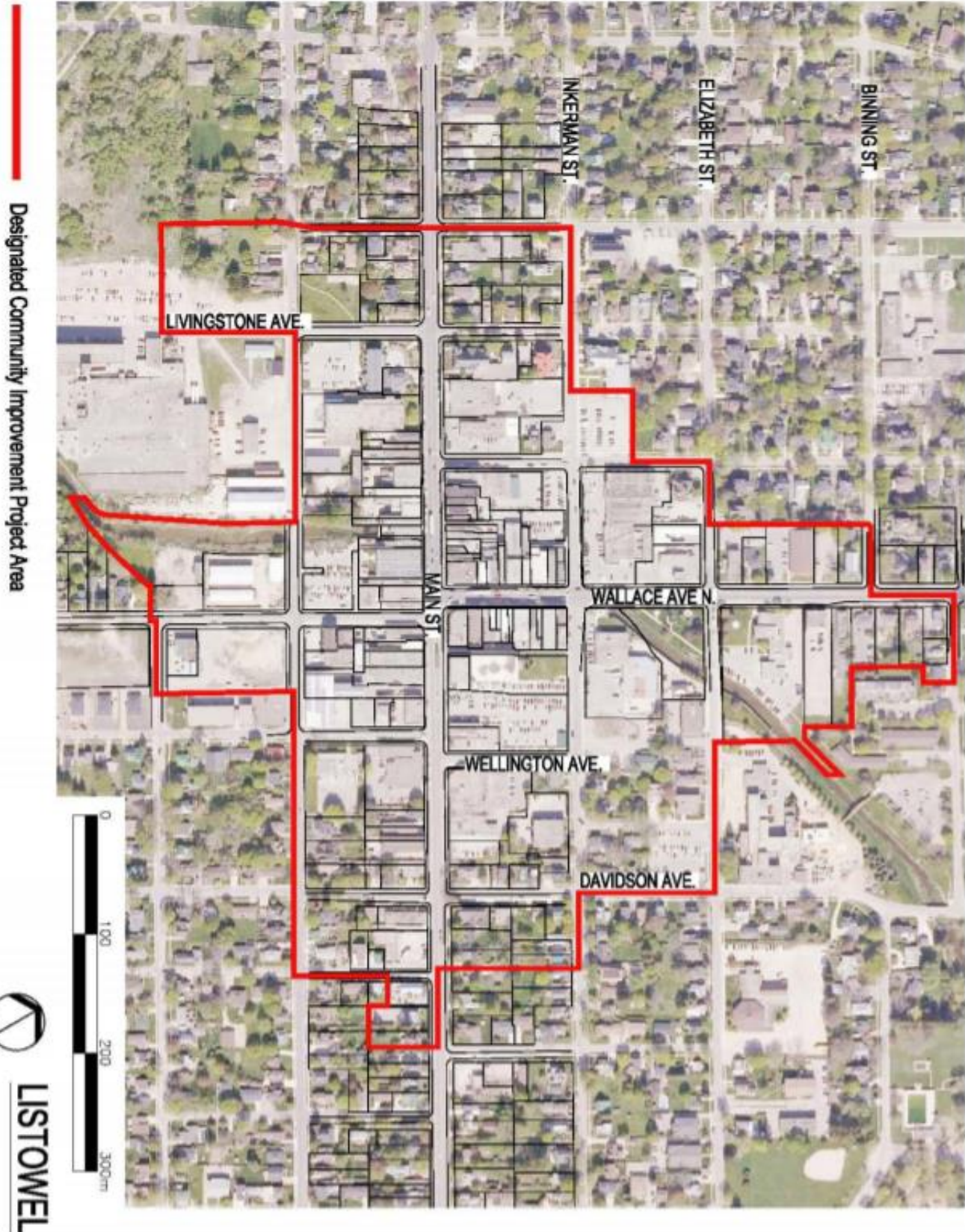
The Town of Listowel was incorporated in 1867. By the time the railway arrived in 1877, the population of Listowel had already begun to swell as the Town began to develop a thriving local industry, including a tannery and furniture manufacturer. As the Town prospered, the downtown continued to grow, maintaining a flourishing commercial district that supported residents, newcomers, and visitors. The downtown of Listowel still thrives today and many of the buildings from the Town's past are still in operation. This document will help maintain and enhance Listowel's commercial core.

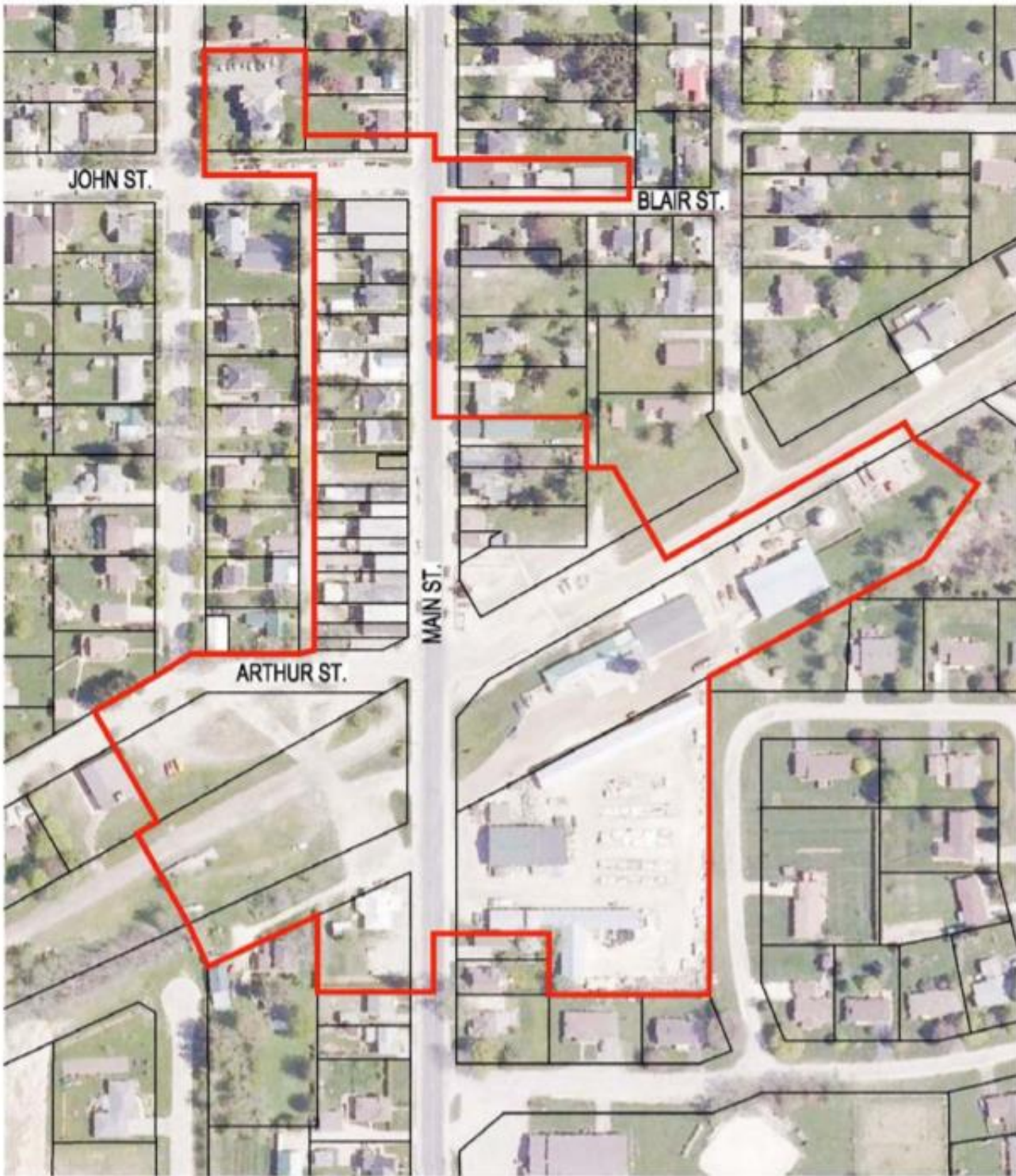


Atwood is located in the former Elma Township. It earned its name in recognition of the wooded areas that once surrounded it. In 1877, the Grand Trunk Railway arrived and built the Atwood Canadian National Railway Station. With the establishment of the railway, Atwood grew in population and industry. Atwood supported a Cement Mill and Flax Mill, which employed many people from the town and surrounding areas. With this rise of activity, the downtown attracted a prosperous business district, supporting a library, butcher, hotel, pharmacist, blacksmith, bank, post office, and a newspaper. This infrastructure exists to this day.



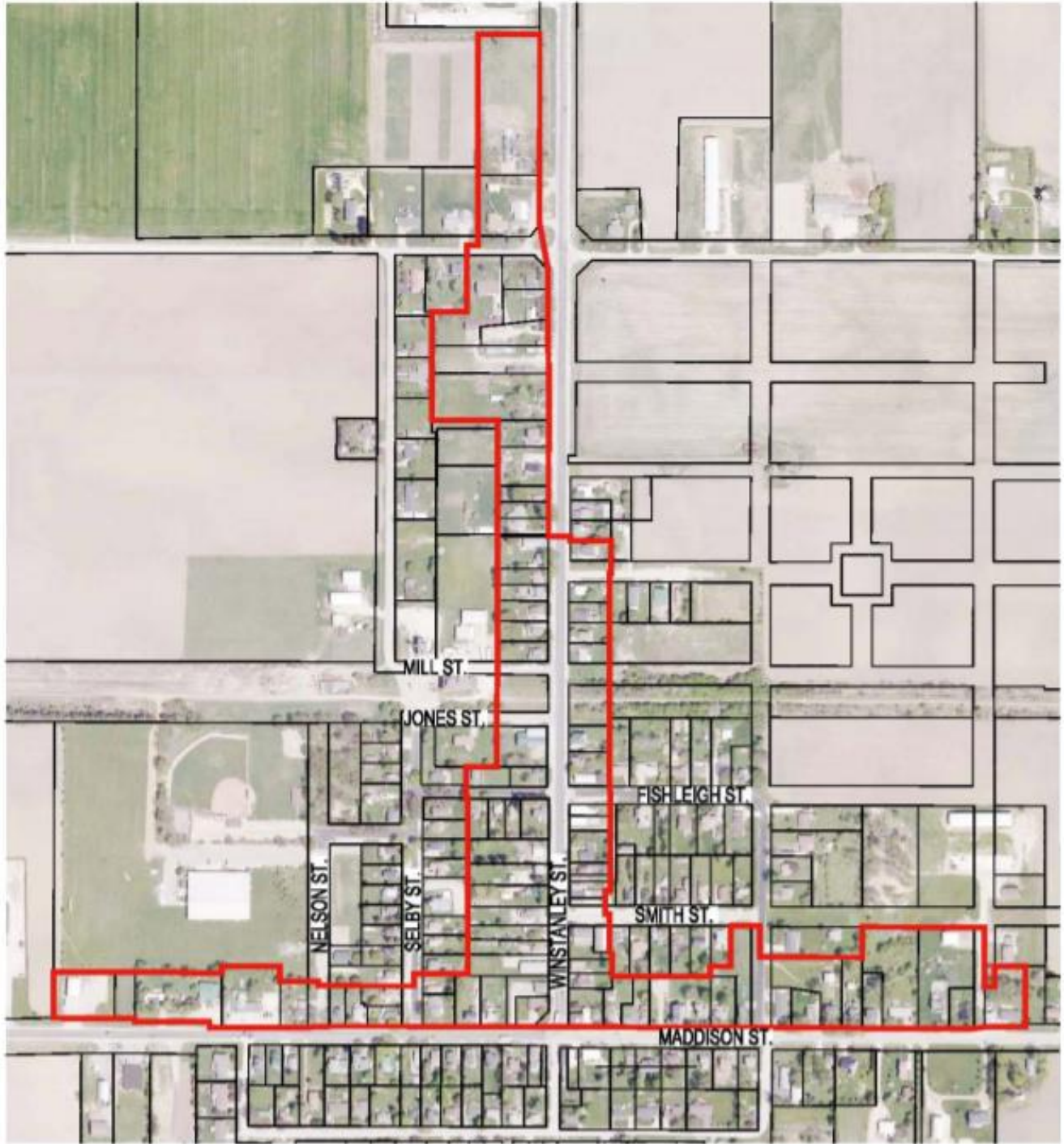
Monkton's Main Street is named after Edward Winstanley, who founded the village in 1857. However, it wasn't until 1906 that Canadian Pacific Railway arrived in Monkton. As a result, Monkton developed a resilient and successful commercial district to serve its community. Its Main Street offered services and goods, including blacksmith shops for the horses that plowed the fields, banks, a leather tannery, butcher shops, stables, a cheese factory, and hotels. Surrounding Winstanley was a long history of industry, from gravel yards to mills to a unique brick industry that mined the red clay below the village's surface. The commercial district along Winstanley has long served Monkton's community, and this document aims to reinvigorate this activity.



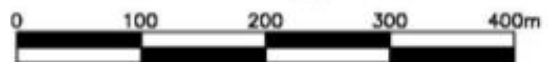


— Designated Community Improvement Project Area





— Designated Community Improvement Project Area



Façade Design Principles

A façade refers to the front of a building or any of its sides that are visible from the public realm. The best façades are ones that are:

Local

Local context, including size, materials, and design rhythm are considered and enforced.

Human scaled

A façade or building that is proportionate to human beings (i.e. pedestrians).

Creative

Façades that promote individual “uniqueness” and characteristics while still complimenting the local context.

Complimentary

Façades that are consistent with the proportions and rhythms of surrounding façades without duplicating or imitating them.

Defined

Where the top, middle, and bottom are clearly distinguishable through materials and architectural details.

Continuous

A façade that reduces building gaps and inconsistencies in the downtown “street wall” and compliments horizontal lines from neighbouring façades (i.e. consistent height among signage bands).

Proportionate

An appropriate ratio between height and width.

Entranceways

- Main entrances should be prominently located and clearly defined. Entrances should be inviting and accessible to pedestrians.
- “Universal design standards” and the AODA guidelines must be used when designing doors and entranceways to ensure safe and comfortable access for users.
- Portable ramps should be applied for changes in grading where there is limited space or a permanent ramp cannot be constructed.
- Ramps and railings should blend with the original structure as much as possible to reduce visual impact.
- Original entranceways of heritage buildings shall not be enclosed with solid materials. If the door is no longer in use, it should be secured and left alone.
- For buildings with heritage character, new doors should be compatible with the overall design.
- Doors along ground floor units used to access upper floor apartments or office space should be consistent with the doors used to enter the commercial property. Solid doors, or doors with opaque glass can be used for residential doorways.
- Illuminate recessed entranceways for pedestrian interest and safety
- The addition of a secondary entrance that is incompatible in size, scale, or material to the overall façade is discouraged.
- Door hardware should be selected considering the traditional character.
- For new and infill development, recessed entranceways are recommended as they complement the Main Street character of North Perth’s downtowns.
- Where possible, “green” materials, or materials that help achieve carbon neutrality, should be considered when installing doors and entranceways in order to meet the Municipality’s carbon footprint reduction strategy.



Recessed doors and glass side windows can help create visual interest for pedestrians



Portable ramps should be used for accessibility where permanent ramps are not suitable.

Windows

Display Windows

- Windows should form part of a larger set of traditional architectural elements including window bases (kickplates), and transom windows.
- Create a cohesive storefront appearance by aligning window heights and unifying window sizes.
- Windows should comprise 50%-75% of the storefront façade, including storefront windows, transoms and doors.
- Storefront windows should be designed to invite natural lighting into the store, provide an area for display space, and to encourage “window shopping”.
- Use transparent glass to provide clear views of storefront displays from the street. This allows for natural surveillance of the street and adjacent outdoor spaces. Dark-tinted windows should be avoided.
- Avoid enclosing old windows on heritage buildings with solid materials. If the window is no longer in use, it should be secured and left for future use.
- Minimize the number of window frames to create enticing display windows
- Painted window frames can add visual interest; bright colours can be used to paint window frames to add contrast (see page 30).
- Minimize the use of graphics and signage on windows so as not to interfere with pedestrian views into display areas. Signage “clutter” is distracting and visually unappealing.
- Where possible, “green” materials, or materials that help achieve carbon neutrality, should be considered when installing windows in order to meet the Municipality’s carbon footprint reduction strategy.



Windows should cover most of the ground façade to invite light and street views into the storefront. Windows should be seen as integral to the overall façade.



This image is not recommended. Buildings should prioritize large and engaging windows to invite “window shopping” and support the overall façade.

Transom Windows & Window Bases

- Restore and maintain windows even when they will be hidden by awnings since awnings are not permanent fixtures and may be removed in the future.
- Incorporate transom windows into new builds.
- Use the same window frame materials and design details as the display window.
- Incorporate, repair, or restore window bases.
- Ensure that window bases are no taller than 0.61m from the ground (24 inches).
- Use high quality materials that are easy to maintain (stone, brick, wood, metal panels, ceramic tiles).



Transom windows are to be maintained or restored, and incorporated into new builds.



Window bases or "kickplates" should be maintained and incorporated into new builds.

Upper floor windows

- Where possible, original window frames and sashes found in historic buildings should be repaired rather than replaced.
- Windows should not be removed or filled in where they have existed historically. Every effort should be made to match replacement windows to the historical openings. Do not fill in architectural details such as arches.
- Windows should comprise approximately 25% of the upper storey façade.
- Upper storey windows should align both vertically with the storefront windows, doors and vertical accents below, as well as horizontally, with upper storey windows on adjacent buildings.
- New development should respect the general proportions, scale and size of those in heritage buildings, particularly when adjacent.
- Upper windows should be rectangular in shape (taller than wide), with decorative architectural features, such as cornices or lintels, for emphasis.
- Windows should have transparent glass surfaces, and should be recessed into the wall surface to assist in articulating the façade.
- Upper storey windows should be able to be opened to encourage natural ventilation.



Upper storey windows on historic or contemporary buildings are integral to a well-designed façade. They shall not be boarded up.

Signage

All signage must comply with Municipal Sign By-Law. Please contact the Municipal Clerk for the most up-to-date By-Laws.

Sign-Bands

- Install or replace storefront signage within the sign band location.
- Air-conditioning or ventilation equipment within the sign-band should be removed.
- Consider framing the signboard with decorative moulding.
- Use high quality materials like wood and metal when designing the sign band and avoid materials such as plexiglass.



The use of high-quality materials for the sign-band can support the overall design of the facade



Fascia Signs

- Signage should be designed to reflect traditional downtowns Main Streets. These typically are fascia, hanging, window, and portable ground signs.
- Use individual lettering made from high quality materials like wood or metal.
- Utilise contrasting colours between the lettering and the sign band to stimulate visual interest.
- Avoid large signs that dominate the façade as they interfere with the architectural character of the building.
- Internally lit, back lit, and neon or plastic materials used for signage are not recommended in the downtown communities.
- All signage should have simple lettering typefaces that are easy-to-read and may be complemented with graphics that relate to the business function.
- Lettering and images on fascia signs should provide depth to the sign, such as raised lettering.
- Colours of lettering can provide an accent to the overall façade and that enhance readability of the sign relative to the base colour of the sign.
- Fascia signage should only be located on façades that have a building entrance.
- Lighting for signage should be done with externally mounted lighting. Elbow or gooseneck lamps are recommended.
- The primary signage for the building should be located on the sign band to separate the storefront windows from the upper façade.



Fascia signage is preferred in the downtown commercial areas. Lettering should be distinct and should contrast with the sign-band.



Window Signs

- Window signs should be limited to 25% of the windows surface as to not obscure or block the display of goods or view lines into the store and of the street.
- Window signs should complement the overall signage program of the business.
- Window signs are to be used only on storefront windows and not upper floor windows.
- Neon, electronic messages, or fluorescent lighting should not be used in window signs.



Window signs can be visually engaging and can add to the overall façade design.



This design is not recommended. Avoid cluttering windows with signage. It is important to maintain visual lines between the street and commercial space.

Projecting Signs

- Hanging signs should be designed so they add to the façade and business character through their creative design. They should be orientation towards pedestrians walking down the street.
- Hanging signs must be located and sized to provide safe passage by pedestrians underneath (2.4 meters as per municipal bylaw) and should be installed perpendicular to the façade and hang from a mounted wall brace.
- Hanging signs should be mounted near the business entrance.
- Where there is a multi-tenanted buildings with multiple storefront entrances, one projecting sign per storefront entrance may be appropriate.
- Mount projecting signs above the main entranceway or at the outer edges of storefronts.



Projecting signs allow a business to showcase their unique brand and creativity and can entice pedestrians.

Sandwich Boards

- Sandwich (or A-frame) board signs should be designed with durable, weatherproof materials and should complement the storefront façade.
- Sandwich board signs should avoid cluttering of the streetscape and pedestrian space. It should be at least 1.2 meters from the storefront.
- Sandwich board signs should only be used during store hours and should be brought indoors when the storefront is not in operation.



Sandwich boards should be designed as an extension of the storefront and should complement the façade.

Awnings

All awnings must comply with Municipal Sign By-Law. Please contact the Municipal Clerk for the most up-to-date By-Laws.

- Storefronts may utilize awnings above windows and doors to provide weather protection, additional opportunities for building signage, sunlight control, and visual interest to the façade.
- Awnings should be rectangular and “traditional” in character, being either striped or a solid colour. Bright primary colours are not recommended.
- Dome awnings are not recommended.
- Awnings should be high quality material to ensure that they withstand seasonal wear and tear.
- When installing awnings across multiple storefront, individual storefront awnings should be used rather than one continuous awning.
- Ensure that the awnings colour is complementary to that of the façade.
- Ensure that entranceways below awnings are illuminated to provide visual interest and safety.



Striped awnings can contribute to a traditional Main Street commercial area. Awnings should offer protection from sun or weather for pedestrians.



Solid, soft-coloured awnings can contribute to a traditional main street commercial area. Awnings can be used for signage.



Bright-coloured, dome shaped awnings are discouraged in the downtown commercial area.

Building Materials

- New builds should take cues from existing building stock when selecting materials (i.e. texture, pattern, scale, material).
- Materials should be high quality, durable, and easily maintainable.
- Buildings and façades should be limited to one or two principal “base” materials (i.e. unglazed brick, mortar, acrylic stucco, concrete, or wood) and should be complimentary to each other.
- Sheet metals should not be used.
- Buildings may use secondary “accent” materials such as wood trim, copper, steel, or other metal to enhance the aesthetics of the façade.
- Façades should have no more than two base colours. Where more than one colour is being used, it should be used to differentiate vertical features of the façade (i.e. storefront versus upper floors). Colours should be chosen to display the unique character of the business while still complementing the general atmosphere of the downtown community.
- Accent colours should be limited to two. They should be used to complement the base colours and overall façade. Accent colours should be used to define architectural features (pillars, window frames, and signband) of the façade.
- Colours chosen for a building’s façade should be soft and muted as opposed to bold and bright. Bold and bright colours should be limited to accent colours (i.e. wood frames, building trim, sign bands).
- Where possible, “green” building materials, or materials that help achieve carbon neutrality should be considered in order to meet the Municipality’s carbon footprint reduction strategy.



Repaired, restored, or enhanced brick facades offer visual interest.



Appropriate use of accent colours on window sills can add visual interest to a façade.



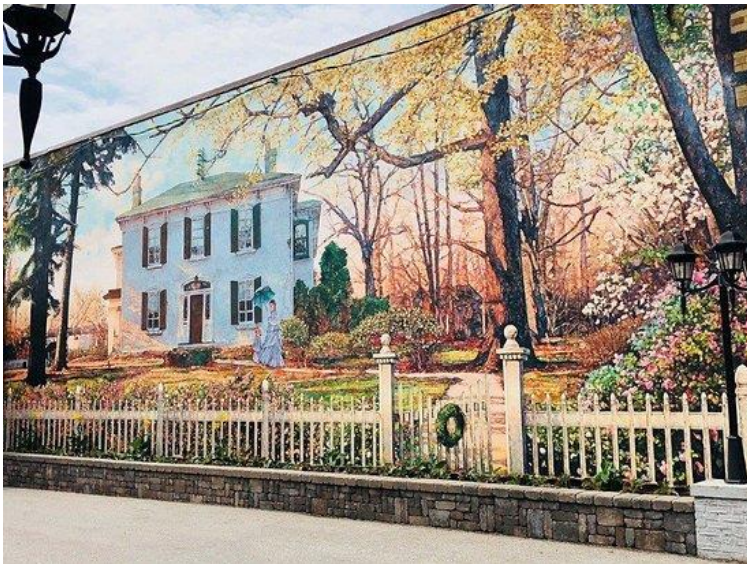
Use of acrylic stucco can create a clean and attractive façade. Limit colouring to two base colours that complement each other.



Wood building materials can create a simple and contemporary design for storefronts.

Public Art and Street Murals

- Public art should be visually oriented to the public realm whether it is located in a public space or on private property.
- Public art must not interfere with circulation of pedestrians, cyclists, or vehicles.
- Public art should not be used for commercial or third party advertising.
- Public art should be an original piece created by a qualified professional artist.
- Public art should be designed to create visual interest in the downtown commercial areas.
- Public art should be durable, low maintenance, long-term expressions that reflect the characteristics of the communities in North Perth.
- Public art is encouraged with private developments.
- Murals should not be painted directly onto a façade. Apply paneling as it is easier for maintenance and removal.



Murals can depict community history and character, and turn large blank facades into an opportunity.



Murals should not be painted directly on brick facades. Install panels to ensure easier maintenance and removal if necessary.



Consider murals beyond heritage themes. Blank facades are an opportunity to communicate present-day values and characteristics.



Sidewalk Patios

Patios must conform to the Municipal Sidewalk Patio Standards By-Law. Please contact the Municipal Clerk for the most up-to-date By-Laws.

- Locate patios so that at least a 2.0 metre unobstructed route on the public sidewalk is maintained.
- Maintain at least a 1.0 metre direct and unobstructed route through a patio to the primary entrance of the business.
- Ensure that the public sidewalk's alignment remain straight within the right-of-way, or alternatively, angled following the configuration of the bump-out along the street.
- Design any structures, such as railings or walls, to complement the building's design using materials that allow visibility to and from the space. Ensure such structures can be easily removed and stored elsewhere.
- For patios entirely on private property, use surface materials that complement those in the public right-of-way, although distinctive enough to define the boundary.



Businesses can establish patios on sidewalks in order to expand their storefront and create more space for customers.

New & Infill Development

New development must comply with Municipal Site Plan By-Law. Please contact the Municipal Clerk for the most up-to-date By-Laws.

New buildings and infill development within North Perth's downtown communities should be mixed-use buildings that are similar to the existing building stock. They should follow traditional Main Street procedures by ensuring that ground floor properties are pedestrian-oriented. This section will provide general recommendations that should be applied in tandem with the guidelines in this document.

Buildings and Structures

- New buildings and additions within the downtown cores should be contemporary and take cues from the existing characteristics of the downtown in relation to building materials, rhythms and alignment (i.e. windows, signbands, horizontal articulation).
- Rather than attempt to replicate heritage designs, modern buildings (or additions) should emphasize complementary and harmonious qualities to Main Street style development.



New development should follow Main Street principles: large engaging windows on commercial properties; upper story properties for office or residential uses with windows that align vertically and horizontally.

Proportions, Scale and Placement

- Downtown commercial areas should adhere to a 2-3 storey streetwall.
- Infill development should respect the scale, massing, footprint, proportions and setback of adjacent buildings to maintain the rhythm and structure of the streetscape.
- New buildings on street corners should be seen as an opportunity for enhanced architectural details or features on façades visible to the public realm.
- Additions should be similar in height to adjacent buildings and should not dominate the existing streetwall nor make subordinate any adjacent heritage buildings.
- Ground floor units should be at least 60% composed of windows in order to create visual interest for pedestrians (i.e. “window shopping”).
- Tinted windows are discouraged so that there is strong visibility between the street and indoor space.
- Entranceways should be designed to enhance retail uses. This can be achieved by creating large entranceways, adding awnings or canopies, and following Main Street design principles.
- Larger setbacks may be permitted in the case of creating pedestrian spaces such as patios or courtyards. Such cases will be considered on a case-by-case basis.



Infill buildings should reflect and complement the existing stock of commercial buildings and should add the existing streetwall.



New buildings should be human scale, should frame the street, and be pedestrian oriented.

Parking

- Parking provided by new buildings should be located in the rear of the building and not between buildings so as to disrupt the streetwall.
- Access to parking spaces should be provided by side streets and not Main Street in order to prevent gaps in the street wall.
- In order to improve efficiency and flows of vehicular traffic, parking would be coordinated across multiple properties when the opportunity is available.
- Where walls or fences are used, they should be designed to be an extension of the building (materials, design, etc.).
- Steps should be taken to physically divide larger parking areas into smaller segments. This can be done by installing landscaped islands and greenery.
- Lighting in parking areas should be designed to provide safety and security and should serve the needs of both drivers and pedestrians.
- Lighting should be distributed evenly across parking areas to ensure visibility and prevent dark spaces.



Fences that border parking areas should be designed to reflect the building features it is associated with.



Vegetation and greenery can be used to segment large parking spaces into smaller sections that are better managed and easier to navigate.



Lighting

- Lighting should focus on highlighting signage or unique architectural features of a building's façade.
- Lighting should be appropriate and style and size to a building's façade.
- "Gooseneck" lighting is recommended to illuminate signage and the building's façade. Gooseneck lighting can be modern or more "traditional" in design.
- Backlit lights are discouraged for commercial façades.
- Flashing or pulsating lights can be distracting to motorists and shall not be permitted in the downtown commercial cores.



Gooseneck lighting is preferred in the downtown commercial areas.



Backlit lighting is discouraged. It is not as visually appealing. It is also more expensive than gooseneck lighting and more difficult to maintain (e.g. when lights burn out).