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## E. Treatment options

The following paragraphs describe a range of options for facade improvements. Your budget and your building should serve as your guides. Be aware of the impact your plans will have on neighboring buildings, as well as the appearance and character of the community as a whole. Pay particular attention to other properties that have been successfully restored, and talk to those property owners about things that worked for them, potential problem areas, and trades people who performed work successfully.

*Maintenance* is the most important key in retaining your building's character. If your building has seen few alterations over the years, consider yourself lucky. You may only need minor repair work to rehabilitate your building. Next to fire, water is the most destructive element to a historic building. Inspect the roof, eaves, joint seals, gutters and down spouts. Make sure all are

working properly. Check window and door seals as well as the soundness of any painted areas. Repair any water leaks immediately. Preservation requires an approach that is much more than cosmetic.

*Restoration* means returning a building to its original appearance. This approach should be considered if your building has historical significance or architectural merit. Many of Chaska's downtown buildings fall into this category, even though the building may be thought of first as "commonplace".

Original architectural features should be retained or repaired wherever possible. If items are missing, new ones should be fabricated to match the original as closely as possible. Detailing and paint colors should be accurately reproduced as well. The purpose of this type of facade treatment is not to create a museum piece but to enhance your building and attract more business. Economically viable

buildings merit such treatment, and many property owners in Chaska have obviously "gone the extra mile" previously to care for and preserve architectural details and features.

*Renovation* means restoring the original character of your building. If original architectural elements are missing, modern materials and techniques may be used to suggest original appearance; possibly at less cost than restoring the actual features. If your building has undergone significant changes over the years, this may be the route for you to consider. One aspect of renovation that often adds new vitality to a community is *adaptive use* of an old building for a new purpose. Business opportunities change over time, and new uses like the McGusta Market on Second Street provide wonderful examples of how a new business use can be accommodated in a building originally constructed for a different purpose. The word "renovation" has been applied

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to illustrations in this manual because it also connotes giving new life to a historic building.

*Redesign* a building that lacks historic character. If your building is a nondescript block set in the streetscape, consult an architect for ways to redesign your facade so it is more compatible with its neighbors. Again, Chaska has numerous examples of buildings that have been renovated and even reconstructed in ways that are sympathetic to the overall architectural character of the downtown and highly functional for contemporary property owners. The authors of this study observed buildings like the water softener business at the corner of Walnut and Third Streets and the renovated Chaska Bakery as instances where a skillful architect or builder worked together with the property owner to construct a storefront treatment that was “appropriate” to the overall community context. Try to learn what you can from the success stories of your neighbors.

Another planning, design, and construction principle discussed throughout this manual is the idea of “*reverseability*”. That means to not modify an old building in a way that permanently changes its historic features in a way that would be difficult or impossible to un-do in the future. Applying stucco over historic Chaska brick or cutting new window openings are examples of the kind of changes that are hard to repair, although reversal of changes like these are far from impossible. Application of new, permanently-bonded coatings would be a type of change much more difficult to reverse. **Abrasive cleaning methods like sandblasting are among the most harmful treatments, since they permanently destroy the core fabric of a building.**

### **New Construction Considerations**

*Width:* The new buildings should reflect the characteristic rhythm of facades

along the street. As discussed earlier, in most Minnesota communities this would imply no unfilled open spaces, but in Chaska open spaces that have existed for many years have, in fact, become part of the “fabric”.

Removal may be the unfortunate fate of an unsound building that has suffered from long-term neglect. If this is the case, consult city planners to discuss alternative uses for the lot. Too often, demolition is considered as the first course of action, but a building that appears on its surface to lack renovation potential may deserve a second look. Once a part of the historic fabric is removed by demolition, its character and contributions to the whole community are gone forever. Whatever level of treatment is chosen should complement the entire streetscape.

*Constructing a new building* to fill a gap alleviates many problems that can disrupt the streetscape. Well-designed new buildings can restore and stabilize

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visual continuity when their architects and builders are sensitive to the details of local architectural character and experienced with how to achieve a successful renovation project.

A new building should also reflect the fact that it is not old. It needs to be compatible with its surroundings, but efforts to exactly copy historical buildings may actually disrupt the integrity of a historic district. New construction should reflect its own time, taking advantage of contemporary materials and methods yet not detract from its historic neighbors. Consult the illustrations on these pages when considering building a new structure in a historic district.

*Height:* With few exceptions, the variations of building heights occur within two stories. The height of new buildings should be within one story of the surrounding buildings.

*Alignment:* Maintain the alignment of facades at the property line.

*Entrances:* The entrances to the historic buildings are most-often recessed, creating a coherent pattern along the sidewalk. This pattern of recessed entrances should be maintained. Avoid introducing new “blank” panels of opaque infill materials on the first story of buildings, and avoid other treatments that would reduce the area of window openings that gave historic storefronts their openness.