



## **SEG 2 – Recommendation Number One Commercial Design Guidelines**

### **Background**

One goal of the Downtown SEG was to determine what, if any, steps should be implemented to protect the existing character and charm of the downtown business area. The current Zoning Code contains standards for design review (Code Section 11-605E) which are intended to provide guidance to the Plan Commission and the Board of Trustees when issuing a Design Review Application. These standards, while helpful, are general in nature and the SEG felt that more specific, visual criteria would benefit not only the Plan Commission and the Trustees but also property owners and developers. It was noted that other communities have adopted and successfully implemented design guidelines similar to those that we recommend. They have also been found to save staff time and reduce project cycle time.

*NOTE: SEG 2 notes that despite the implementation of the recommended Design Review Guidelines, there is a concern that strict adherence to the Zoning Code in the downtown area could have the unintentional effect of creating developments that are incompatible with the current sense of the downtown. Those concerns relate primarily to bulk zoning regulations and property where current parking requirements would force the redevelopment of sites in a less than optimal configuration. With respect to parking, these recommendations reference the SEG 2 Parking Recommendations.*

### **Key Findings**

There was overwhelming support of eighty nine percent (89%) among the residents that future commercial development in the Village downtown area should include an improved design review element. Residents cited as important the maintenance of the historic character and design integrity that currently exists in downtown Hinsdale and the adjacent areas. In addition, the members of SEG 2 were agreed in their belief that commercial design review at some level was critical in the future development of the downtown area.

## **Recommendation**

### **2-1a Implementation of Mandatory Design Review Guidelines for commercial development in the Village downtown and buffer areas**

*Definition:* Written and visual guidelines containing specific, identifiable criteria to help guide new construction as well as compatible alterations or additions to existing commercial structures.

#### *Critical Success Factors*

1. Specific, identifiable, illustrated, visual criteria developed by a Commercial Design Task Force; such criteria should support and coordinate with current design standards found in Section 11-605E of the Zoning Code and be modeled after successful formats from like communities. These criteria would then be reviewed and recommended by the Plan Commission and adopted by the Village Trustees. These guidelines should reference the National Registry designation of the downtown and should specifically address authenticity of design in a variety of traditional architecture styles, the use of traditional building materials, architectural detailing, roof lines, building mass, scale and composition, as well as site considerations such as landscaping, lighting and related amenities.
2. Institute professional qualifications for at least 3 members of the Plan Commission such members to be residents of the Village as well as architects, land use professionals, landscape design architects, urban planning experts or persons similarly qualified or trained.
3. Developers and property owners are encouraged to use the Village Staff for an initial review of their projects.
4. Formal project review and application of the Design Guidelines by the Plan Commission. The Plan Commission may approve the project, may reject the project, or may recommend alterations, re-submittal and further review. The decision of the Plan Commission is binding and may be appealed only to the Village Board.
5. Any approved project must, at the property owner's expense, provide a model to scale of the project to be inserted as a component into the scale model of the downtown.

*Funding and Cost Considerations:* The Village is currently investigating grant opportunities through the state Historic Preservation Agency to assist the Village in the development of the guidelines. The agency sponsors a 70/30-match program for the development of guidelines in historic districts.

*Implementation Considerations:* Adopt an ordinance containing Design Review Guidelines and specifying the implementation process of such guidelines. Revise the requirements of the Plan Commission to include specific professional qualifications for a minimum of 3 members of the Plan Commission.

**2-1b Establish an exception under the Zoning Code for the rebuilding of certain downtown historic structures to their exact specifications, at the time of destruction, despite the legal non-conformance of said structures (ie: lot coverage, height); such exception to apply only in the case of the destruction of the structure, in whole or in part, where said destruction was caused by fire, flood, or other acts completely beyond the control of the property owner**

*Definition:* Detailed listing of historic sites in the downtown area that, if destroyed, would be subject to exemption from the Zoning Code in so far as the rebuilding of such structures would create legal non-conformities under the Code.

*Critical Success Factors*

1. Thoughtful analysis of historic structures in the downtown area that are considered so significant that permanent destruction of them would have a severe negative impact on the character of the downtown area, said analysis to be made by the appropriate Village body. By way of example, SEG 2 would note our specific concern with the site at the S.W. corner of 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Washington Street.
2. Designation of a limited number of such historic structures by the Village Board.
3. Overseeing of any such project by the appropriate governing body to insure the integrity of the rebuilt structure.

**2-1c Adopt an ordinance containing the exemptions from the Zoning Code for the rebuilding of these non-conforming historic structures. Facilitate the re-development and re-use of certain historic buildings in the downtown area beyond what is allowed under the current Zoning Code**

*Definition:* Detailed listing of specific historic buildings in the downtown where the re-development and re-use would be given flexibility in specific zoning requirements.

*Critical Success Factors*

1. A specific listing of historic structures afforded these zoning exemptions such list to refer to the National Registry Survey and to include only those structures listed as contributing or significant.
2. The development by a Task Force or the Historic Preservation Commission of specific requirements of the Zoning Code that would not apply, or would apply in a limited way, to the re-development or re-use of the historic structures. Any such modifications to the Zoning Code for this purpose should directly and positively impact the re-development or re-use of the subject property and should include only those requirements to which strict adherence would effectively prevent said re-use or re-development.
3. By way of example, SEG 2 notes:
  - a) The use of certain historic sites for restaurants should be encouraged and limitations on that use due to Code requirements should, where possible, be eliminated; and
  - b) The height of certain historic buildings (especially at key corner locations) should be accommodated.

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*Implementation Considerations:* Adopt an ordinance listing specific historic structures in the downtown and the Code requirements from which the re-development or re-use of said structures would be exempt.

**2-1d Maintain the current height restriction in the downtown area of 35 feet but revise the Code to allow only two story buildings**

*Definition:* Under the current Code a building can be built to 35 feet (with certain accommodations for architectural detail) but can be three stories. The Code should be amended to allow the construction of only two story buildings within the current height allowance.

*Critical Success Factors:* An understanding that two story buildings better exemplify the character and charm of the downtown business area in look, feel and utility.

*Implementation Considerations:* Adopt an amendment to the Zoning Code restricting new development in the Central Business District to two story buildings.



## **SEG 2 - Recommendation Two Enhancing Downtown Hinsdale's Authentic Charm and Historic Character**

### **Background**

Many of our recommendations under this category were made to the Village Board in a memo in May which has now been revised and added to. Kristen Gundersen's 8/25/2006 memo updated items that were already being pursued.

### **Key Findings**

#### ***Historically Significant Downtown Buildings***

- 57% supported working with owners to relax building restrictions in order to replicate the original character of the building.
- 34% supported enacting ordinances to preserve the structures.

***Total in support-91%***

The recent survey questioned residents about Special Programs for Historic homes:

-36% strongly supported and 47% supported (***Total in support-83%***) "Relaxing side yard, garage and floor area restrictions for easier preservation, expansion and renovation of homes older than 50 years." It is felt by our SEG that this kind of support would also extend to preserving and enhancing the best of downtown Hinsdale.

The overwhelming support for our historic heritage and our own discussion within our SEG leads us to the following

#### ***Streetscapes, Alleys and Second Floor shops***

Hinsdale is an authentic, small town center that interacts with students, commuters, residents, and visitors who come to shop, work or attend professional appointments (medical, lawyer, salon, banking etc.) It is pedestrian oriented versus geared towards vehicles. It has a European feeling with outdoor café seating and lush landscaping. Our SEG felt that Hinsdale had many "hidden spaces" in the number of merchants located on second floors and in alleys. Unfortunately they are too hidden and the village needs to do more to develop these "hidden spaces" as a way to promote the ambiance and appeal of Hinsdale.

## Recommendation

**2-2a Make it a stated policy of our Village Board, Plan Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Building Dept, and Fire Dept, that support and accommodations will be made where appropriate to help the adaptive re-use, renovation and preservation of our historic downtown buildings (over 50 years old)**

### *Critical Success Factors*

1. Benchmark other communities that have done this successfully, ie; Rock Island, IL St. Charles, IL, Galena, IL, and build concrete examples where accommodations can be made.

Examples: **-Avoiding a costly ADA requirement for a elevator in a restaurant**-Rock Island suggested making the second floor a mezzanine which negated the ADA requirement. It was a *proactive problem solving approach*. **Historic retrofitting of a building façade that would encroach on the Public right of way**- In Hinsdale, when the Zazu Salon building underwent renovation for a crumbling brick façade, Drivet was the *only solution* that would not encroach upon the public right of way. Neither the Plan Commission, nor ZPS liked the Drivet because it was not compatible with the historic “appearance” of the building or the area. In hindsight, if we had a *stated policy* that preserving the historic look of our downtown was a priority, could we not have waived 3-4 inches of our sidewalk to get a brick façade and achieved a much more authentic building that would have complimented our National Register Historic Designation?

2. Use the Hinsdale National Register Downtown Architectural Survey as the blueprint for which significant and contributing buildings Hinsdale should work hard to accommodate. In the unlikely event a building was destroyed or severely damaged, put it in our Zoning that certain buildings could be re-built to duplicate the original even if they did not meet current zoning on height, setbacks, parking, or other key items. Certain ADA or health/safety codes perhaps could not be avoided.

**2-2b Modify our Sign Ordinance to allow tasteful, historic looking projecting signs for 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and alley merchants. Investigate signs near the entrance to alleys to provide direction to vendors in an alley or upstairs**

### *Critical Success Factors:*

1. Encourage art murals and other art at entrance of both pedestrian and vehicular alleys to “draw” people in. Also student art for empty storefronts.
2. Replace the long row of brightly colored plastic newspaper boxes in front of Einsteins and other locations to match the ones at the train station. If cost is a deterrent then assign it to a multi-year budget so that it will be addressed when the funds are available. This would all be part of the consistent “site amenities” for our downtown to include benches and trash containers.
3. It should be a stated goal of the Board and the Plan Commission to try and preserve the “Streetscape” of Hinsdale’s downtown that for the most part

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consists of uninterrupted single storefronts. This was how our town was originally developed, but our current zoning with parking requirements and setbacks could possibly promote a legally conforming building which is totally incompatible with the historic look of our downtown. This is an issue which needs to be recognized and addressed. An example of a problematic lot is the Hinsdale Fruit Store at First and Lincoln. Another aspect of this “streetscape” is that we have buildings, which have varied depths at the sidewalk and different rooflines. Preserving this unique single building look even if a developer were to come in with a multi-lot plan is important. This can best be illustrated within our new design guidelines.

4. Replace the “Free Weekend Parking” sign for the commuter and HMS lot with a much more attractive and permanent sign.
5. Existing Height of 35 ft. in Downtown should be maintained with a preference for keeping buildings at 2 stories rather than the currently allowed by code 3 stories.



## **SEG 2 - Recommendation Three Buffer Areas to the Central Business District**

### **Background**

The CBD SEG spent much of their time discussing both the Central Business District as well as its surrounding areas. In these discussions there were many conversations regarding height, density, impact on traffic and parking, green space, scale and land use. Several key locations were selected and “what if” scenarios were developed to incorporate into the survey.

### **Key Findings**

Our SEG spend time discussing many concerns about future development specific to the buffer areas. Consensus was achieved that future development should preserve the current function of the areas as well as maintaining the scale, historic feel and charm. There was strong concern that development of the buffer areas should not have the unintended consequence of relocating viable businesses away from the historic district into the buffer leaving the CBD with many empty store fronts. We questioned the number of businesses that could be supported in the village should the buffer areas be developed for retail.

The group was in accord regarding the opinion that residential development in the buffer areas needs be transitional and have the look and feel of single-family homes.

The three dimensional impact of future development with both front and rear function is an essential consideration.

### **Recommendation**

**2-3 Complimentary to the scale model that is being made for the CBD, we recommend that the buffer areas also be rendered to scale. Use of this visual tool for future development was determined to be invaluable**

*Critical Success Factors:* This group also agreed with several other groups and supports the development of Design Review Guidelines for the buffer areas and investigating sustainability. The current height of 40 ft should only be allowed if the building conforms to a residential/single family look. Hinsdale is a traditional community that can rise to the challenge of future development to satisfy the needs of today and tomorrow in a creative

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manner. To guide future development, this group felt it was essential that developers need specific design guidelines that provide pointed direction delineating the desired outcomes that are supported by the village code as well as the residents. The desire for managed control of the destiny of the buffer areas by the residents and elected officials rather than developers was echoed throughout our deliberations.



## **SEG 2 - Recommendation Four Enhancing Hinsdale’s Streetscapes, Alleys and Second Floor Shops**

### **Background**

Hinsdale is an authentic, small town center that interacts with students, commuters, residents, and visitors who come to shop, work or attend professional appointments (medical, lawyer, salon, banking etc.) It is pedestrian oriented versus geared towards vehicles. It has a European feeling with outdoor café seating and lush landscaping.

### **Key Finding**

#### ***Streetscapes, Alleys and 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor shops***

SEG 2 felt that Hinsdale had many “hidden spaces” in the number of merchants located on second floors and in alleys. Unfortunately they are too hidden and the Village needs to do more to develop these “hidden spaces” as a way to promote the ambiance and appeal of Hinsdale. It was also felt we needed to protect and enhance our unique streetscape.

### **Recommendation**

**2-4 Modify our Sign Ordinance to allow tasteful, historic looking projecting signs for second floor and alley merchants. Investigate signs near the entrance to alleys to provide direction to vendors in an alley or upstairs**

#### *Critical Success Factors:*

1. Encourage art murals and other art at entrance of both pedestrian and vehicular alleys to “draw” people in. Also student art for empty storefronts.
2. Replace the long row of brightly colored plastic newspaper boxes in front of Einsteins and other locations to match the ones at the train station. Wrought iron has a more historic look than bright plastic boxes. If cost is a deterrent then assign it to a multi-year budget so that it will be addressed when the funds are available. This would all be part of the consistent “site amenities” for our downtown to include benches and trash containers.
3. It should be a stated goal of the Board and the Plan Commission to try and preserve the “Streetscape” of Hinsdale’s downtown that for the most part consists of uninterrupted single storefronts. This was how our town was originally developed, but our current zoning with parking requirements and

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setbacks could possibly promote a legally conforming building which is totally incompatible with the historic look of our downtown. This is an issue, which needs to be recognized and addressed. An example of a problematic lot is the Hinsdale Fruit Store at First and Lincoln. Another aspect of this “streetscape” is that we have buildings, which have varied depths at the sidewalk and different rooflines. Preserving this unique single building look even if a developer were to come in with a multi-lot plan is important. This can best be illustrated within our new design guidelines.

4. Replace the “Free Weekend Parking” sign for the commuter and HMS lot with a much more attractive and permanent sign.



## **SEG 2 - Recommendation Five Attract more Restaurants to Hinsdale!!**

### **Key Findings**

This was one of those overwhelming responses by citizens in the first survey. Our SEG discussed this in depth and talked to various developers to try and find out why Hinsdale has failed to attract restaurants where other communities have not. Factors such as above market rents, a downtown off the beaten path, and chain restaurants that often require higher traffic, parking, and clusters of other restaurants, all contribute to the challenge of attracting restaurants

### **Recommendation**

**2-5 Create an official *Advocate* within the Village to help streamline and ease the process for restaurant developers who want to locate in Hinsdale. Make sure all staff knows it is a *stated priority* that Hinsdale wants to acquire more restaurants. Have the EDC proactively invite restaurant owners to look at Hinsdale as a location**

#### *Critical Success Factors:*

1. Examine *in depth* the zoning, fire and ADA requirements and determine if there is flexibility or creative solutions to what appear to be obstacles. Examples of obstacles are: parking requirements, elevators, food preparation/storage in basements, loading docks, very high sewage permit and impact fees.
2. Currently our liquor license requirements are the same throughout the village. It has been discussed whether it would be prudent to alter the restrictions on the size of a bar at a restaurant for the area up on Ogden which is more likely to attract a larger restaurant, which might decide not to if the bar size is restricted. Ogden SEG should include this in their report.
3. Look for successful models in other towns similar to Hinsdale to see what they have done to attract restaurants despite challenges.
4. Interview restaurants/developers who have expressed interest in opening restaurants in Hinsdale and who have decided not to. Find out their reasons why?
5. Investigate whether ADA requirements absolutely require an elevator, whether we could negotiate with our Fire Department on a smaller elevator than the 4x6 foot one they currently require. There are reclining wheelchair type stretchers that can be used which could fit in smaller elevators. The cost of a bigger elevator can be \$80,000 vs. \$40,000 for a smaller one that also would take up less valuable retail space.



## **SEG 2 - Recommendation Six Community Events**

### **Background**

Hinsdale’s downtown is a draw not only for its shopping but as a gathering place for visitors and residents. Events in the downtown promote a sense of community and also draw business for our merchants.

### **Key Findings**

There is strong resident support for maintaining the Charm and character of the Hinsdale Central Business District. Much of that charm and character is derived from the services, amenities, unique shops and businesses found within the Central Business District. SEG 2 has identified the need for forming a stronger partnership between the business sector, public sector, civic organizations and residents. It is important that the Central Business District is looked at as a “third space” in that it is a place where people want to spend their time outside of home and work. Residents were supportive of (Task Force surveys March 2003) special events within the village.

### **Recommendation**

#### **2-6 The village should look to broaden its event structure and encouraging continued use of the downtown and public areas**

##### *Critical Success Factors:*

1. Look to encourage partnerships with the local businesses through the Community Development Director creating stronger ties between the business sector, the village and non-profits. Create a platform where these organizations can get together to plan, strategize and work more closely together.
2. Benchmark what other surrounding communities are doing with regards to marketing, community events and community development.
3. Market the Village and its unique charm and a place for events. Promoting its accessibility by rail, unique shops and amenities is important to creating a “unique brand” differentiating Hinsdale from surrounding communities, shopping areas and malls.
4. Cooperation from groups in the business sector, public sector, civic organizations and the like.

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*Cost Considerations:* Supporting the Community Development Director with adequate staff and the funding costs associated.

*Implementation Considerations:* The village must be more proactive about anticipating vacancies while looking to pursue businesses to possibly locate to Hinsdale. Look to ways of making it easier for businesses to do business. (Easing parking requirements for restaurants, reducing fees for outside seating etc.)



## **SEG 2 - Recommendation Seven Parking**

### **Background**

How the Village addresses the parking issue can dramatically affect the streetscape and historic nature of our downtown.

### **Key Findings**

The survey showed that seventy five percent (75%) of residents support the Village using tax dollars to improve downtown parking and sixty two percent (62%) support businesses paying into a parking fund versus physically providing parking spaces. About sixty percent (60%) are in favor of either a stand alone or mixed use retail/commercial structure with parking. Our SEG discussed parking primarily on how it impacted development and historic preservation. It is difficult to meet the current parking requirement as mandated by code due to the narrow, small lot configuration of our downtown. Recent changes to exempt restaurants from a parking requirement were viewed positively by our SEG.

### **Recommendations**

**2-7a Have the Village spearhead any large parking development and shoulder the majority of the responsibility, and in addition have businesses pay into a parking fund**

#### *Critical Success Factors*

1. The parking fund should be a stand alone fund that can not be used for other Village budget items.
2. The amount businesses pay into the fund should not be so prohibitive as to make any re-development not feasible. Benchmark other communities.
3. The village can investigate other funding mechanisms that allow the burden of the cost of new parking to be shared by both current and future residents (bonds etc..)and could tap into grants from Metra or the State.
4. Increase parking permit fees to generate more funds.

**2-7b The Village needs to maintain the historic streetscape in our downtown of uninterrupted buildings and small scale**

*Critical Success Factors:* The Village/Plan Commission needs to be aware that strict adherence to our current parking requirements for new developments could have the unintentional effect of creating developments that are incompatible with the historic nature of our downtown. Ie; creating parking lots between buildings or parking under a stilt building. (Fruit Store)

Any parking solution should be compatible with the appearance within our Historic District and could incorporate first floor activity so that it blends with the current streetscape and provides vibrancy and activity at the street level.

*Implementation Considerations:* Benchmarking other communities for ideas and best practices is a key component. Phone interviews of communities that have tackled this issue should be targeted.