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PROTECTING THE DESIGN OF HISTORIC DOWNTOWN

Downtown Mason City is a beautiful and vital cultural resource. Maintaining its character is essential in keeping Downtown the historic and cultural heart of the city. The construction of a pole building and painting the side of a historic building with bright red paint in the early 2000s led the Downtown Association (the precursor to Main Street Mason City) to request that the City adopt regulations to preserve Downtown's historic character. In 2004, the Zoning Ordinance was amended to state that original exterior building materials on Downtown buildings, such as brick, stone, or punched metal, could not be covered with artificial materials (such as EIFS) or be painted. Some buildings had been covered or painted prior to when the new rules were adopted, and were thus "grandfathered in." In 2006, the Downtown National Register Historic District was designated, and several significant buildings were noted as "contributing" to the historic character of the district. There are also individual buildings that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, such as the City National Bank/Historic Park Inn, the Kirk Apartments, and the Brick and Tile Building.

These amendments for the downtown zoning district are so that owners know what they can and cannot change of their building's physical appearance. Keeping our registered historic places in their best original condition is the goal of this ordinance. This is not to say no changes can ever be made, just that the application of façade materials cannot alter the historic character of the building, and some specific materials are prohibited from use. The Historic Preservation Commission can be an asset to building owners if they are looking for an innovative and cost-effective solution to preserving their important piece of history.

A new FAQ resource is now available online at <https://bit.ly/434T8WA>

A copy of the amended Zoning Ordinance is on the City's website (www.masoncity.net; click on *Departments>>Development Services>>Planning and Zoning Division>>Zoning Ordinance-City of Mason City*). The relevant information starts on page 13-2. You can also call (641) 421-3626 or email Planning and Zoning Manager Tricia Sandahl at tsandahl@masoncity.net.

