



# NEBRASKA MAIN STREET NETWORK Design Case Studies

Downtown Schuyler, Nebraska  
Fall 2020

Project Sponsored By:



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# Disclaimer

The Nebraska Main Street Network provides these design case studies as an educational tool for member communities. The illustrations are conceptual in nature only and take no specific consideration of local codes, standards, permit process or design review.



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# Introduction

These case studies and recommendations were based on field survey that took place on October 23, 2020. At that time the project team along with Schuyler's economic development director toured each case study building. Project team members include Elizabeth Chase, the Executive Director of the Nebraska Main Street Network and Melissa Dirr Gengler, President and Owner of Historic Resources Group, Inc. a historic preservation consulting firm in Lincoln, Nebraska.

The recommendations in this document are intended to illustrate best practices established through the Main Street program as well as sensitive alterations to the buildings. All design work should and planning should be done in consultation with and carried out by a registered architect, engineer or qualified contractor.

Properties may be eligible for financial incentives through a variety of local and federal sources. Each of these programs comes with varying degrees of oversight and limitations.

## **USDA Rural Development Rural Energy for America Program**

Renewable Energy System and Energy Efficiency Improvement Guaranteed Loans & Grants in Nebraska

Application deadline March 31, 2021

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-energy-america-program-renewable-energy-systems-energy-efficiency/ne>

## **Schuyler Community Development Resources**

- Loan Programs/Commercial Construction Loans
- Historic Downtown Sign Grant
- Commercial Building Program-LB840, Max per Building \$60,000
- Façade and Building Improvement Fund

<https://www.schuylerdevelopment.net/loan-programs>

## **Nebraska Historic Tax Credit and Federal Historic Tax Credit**

*(NOTE: available only for certified historic structures or those identified as contributing resources to the Schuyler Downtown Historic District)*

Contact Ryan Reed

Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office

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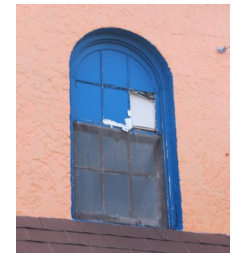
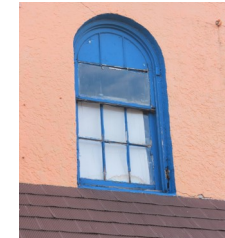
# Case Study #1

Burrito House & Adjacent Vacant Building to the East  
309 East 12th Street

# Visual Observations Burrito House

The Burrito House restaurant is considered a contributing resource in the Schuyler Downtown Historic District National Register nomination. The building was constructed c. 1920 for the Avalon Theater. It is a 1 ½ building with stucco cladding the exterior, two arched windows at the second floor and an angled clay tile parapet between stuccoed pilasters caps the building. Today an angled asphalt-shingle canopy spans the middle of the façade above the storefront.

The main floor houses the restaurant, accessed by a contemporary aluminum pedestrian door next to a large plate glass display window/storefront. The restaurant interior is decorated with bright primary colors. Each tabletop is tiled with Mexican tiles in an array of multi-colored geometric designs. The exterior façade is painted light orange with blue trim.



# Recommendations

## Exterior Repair

### Stucco

The exterior appears to be in good to fair condition. However, there are areas where the stucco finish is spalling and bowing slightly. Stucco as a material has been used since ancient times and is still widely used throughout the world. Historically stucco (up until the late 1800s) was primarily lime-based, but with the advent and of Portland cement, the composition of stucco changed to a much harder and more durable material. The same is true for plaster that is often used interchangeably with stucco. Stucco was popular in many revival styles of architecture at the turn and first part of the twentieth century, the period of construction of this property. Stucco was an affordable and readily available material. This is apparent under the first story asphalt shingled canopy where the stucco is crazing. Most stucco deterioration is the result of water infiltration either through the roof, around chimneys, windows or door openings, or ground water wicking through the foundation. These could be caused by ground or foundation settlement, opening a crack; lintel or door frame settlement; insufficient, clogged or leaking gutters and downspouts, biological growth from intrusive vegetation, moisture migration within the walls due to interior condensation and humidity; vapor problems from furnace, bathroom and kitchen vents; or poor site drainage around the foundation. Water or moisture infiltration will cause the wood lath to rot and metal lath and nails to rust which will eventually cause the stucco to lose its bond and pull away. Horizontal surfaces such as the tops of parapet walls or chimneys are particularly vulnerable. An evaluation of the roof, roof drains, and structure of the canopy by a qualified professional will identify any water infiltration or roof repair issues that may be warranted. Repair to the cause of the damage is important to fix, prior to repairing the damaged stucco. Often small hairline cracks can be sealed with a thin slurry of new stucco and painted or white washed. Additional detailed information can be found in the *Preservation Brief 22: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stucco*. (see resource list at the end of the document)

### Windows

The second floor arched 6/6 windows are an important feature to the façade. If possible consider retention of the existing historic windows. If the historic windows are deteriorated beyond repair, then replacements in appropriate configuration to match the existing with the arched top and the multi-lights should be considered. Aluminum frame windows are acceptable as well as wood-clad aluminum frame. To preserve and continue to enhance the historic character of the building, vinyl windows should be avoided. Replacement windows do not need to be true divided lights but can have an applied muntin to both the interior and exterior glass pane with interior spacer to give the depth of the historic window. If aluminum clad windows are selected, the overall color scheme of the exterior should be considered, since the window units can be purchased in specific colors.



Current Condition

Possible Improvements

The photo rendering illustrates one example of how the exterior of the building could be rehabilitated to provide street impact and attract customers. New paint on the body of the building with a complimentary trim color in neutral tones will emphasize the architecture. A new awning applied just under the second story windows and extending down to the top of the door in a bright, vibrant color will unify the façade. The existing door, glass block sidelight, and large display window seem to be in good condition and should remain. A new vinyl or painted sign on the window glass to identify the restaurant along with a new projecting sign on the building will modernize and help with brand recognition.

A small table and chairs for to go orders or to enjoy a drink could be placed on the sidewalk. During Covid restrictions, this could provide a nice “pick-up” spot. To bring more color and a festive nature to the business a large planter on either side of the door and window will add greenery and warmth to the entry.



Current Signage



Possible New Sign Designs



These simple, but highly graphic and colorful designs are easy to read, maintain the company identify, and provide new image to the branding.



An additional opportunity exists for an outdoor seating area behind the building.

Basic clean-up at the alley side could provide a cozy and ideal outdoor seating or group reservation area. This has been successfully done at other locations in similar sized communities.

One example is at the Black Crow restaurant in downtown Beatrice. An adjacent building was removed and the space converted to outdoor seating for the restaurant. A fence to separate it from the sidewalk area, some hardscape ground cover and tables with umbrellas added to accommodate the new space. Lights can be strung between buildings for ambiance and tables can be as simple as picnic benches or actual outdoor metal tables and chairs.

Important factors to consider would be to incorporate weather resistant materials that do not have to be shifted inside for the winter months.

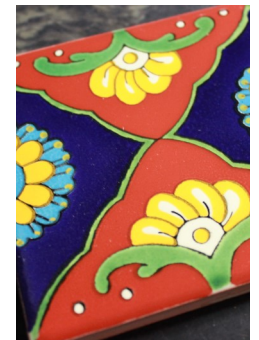
Another consideration could include large outdoor space heaters to accommodate business during all months of the year. These have proven effective even during the cold months to create small dining nodes. Other features like an exterior gas fireplace or small stage area or platform that creates a private special seating area could be beneficial.



# Visual Observations Adjacent Vacant Building

The vacant building located to the east of the Burrito House is a one story, stucco façade with corrugated steel covering the upper portion of the façade. Window and door openings have been infilled on the main elevation, and the building is listed as a non-contributing resource in the downtown historic district.

The lower level is painted dark blue and the full-width canopy is metal with exposed brackets painted brown. This simple façade offers some opportunity to utilize the colorful Mexican tiles in the owner's collection.



# Recommendations

## Exterior Repair

### Stucco

Repairs to the main level stucco should be identified and addressed. Refer to the stucco repair information included in the Burrito House recommendations.

### Metal Slipcover

Retain the corrugated metal paneling at the parapet wall. The metal adds to the feeling of the restaurant theme and can be incorporated into branding. The possibility of removing the metal paneling is an option, but with the unknown condition of the walls beneath, it may cause more damage to remove it rather than to retain it and work the feature into the branding for the business. Repair the area and put up new slipcover paneling where a sign had been mounted previously.

### Signage

New signage could be added in the space of the metal panels to break up the expanse and identify the business. Two distinct sign placements across the façade will provide additional signage for multiple businesses within the building. The awning structure should remain in place with the large exposed support brackets. It can either be painted a bright color or replaced with fabric awning on the existing structure.

### Window Openings

The former window openings should be restored with new windows. This will help bring people into the restaurant and the transparency to see what is going on inside the building provides an added sense of comfort for the pedestrian. The façade could be painted a light neutral color as shown in the illustration below. To add dimension and color to the elevation, a row or band of decorative tiles could be added across the stucco first story just under the window line. Additionally, a tile mosaic could be added in the segmental arched recessed opening that remains infilled.

These alterations will improve the exterior of the building and add character to the new business(es).



Current Condition

*Flat sign board locations  
for business signage*



*Bands of colorful decorative tile  
below the windows*

Possible Improvements

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# Case Study #2

1120 B Street

# Visual Observations

## 1120 B Street

This two-story commercial block was constructed c. 1889 with alterations c. 1950 and c. 1970. It has brick veneer cladding and a flat roof. Four historic window openings divide the elevation into four bays. One historic multi-light wood window remains in place indicating the historic configuration of the original windows. The remaining three window openings have been reduced in size, infilled with plywood sheets, and new 1/1 vinyl windows fill the space. A historic metal awning extends across the first floor storefront. A new residential pedestrian door accesses the second story and replaced an historic glazed wood door. The first floor retains a recessed central entrance storefront with aluminum display windows flanking a glazed wood entry door. Glazed enamel panels or Carrara glass formerly clad the storefront area and date a renovation from the 1950s. Some of these panels are missing. The building is identified as a contributing resource to the National Register historic district.



# Recommendations

## Storefront & Canopy

### Canopy

The historic storefront provides a sheltered and welcoming entry to the building. The historic metal canopy should be retained. Repair to the canopy skirting could include new sheet metal to finish the edge and/or paint to unify the appearance of the canopy. Repair decking of the canopy to stabilize the structure and ensure weather tight for the pedestrians underneath. Integrity of the canopy chains should be verified and the chains repainted glossy black color to enhance the existing appearance. The open recessed entry should be retained.

### Signage

New signage within the ample storefront windows could include vinyl lettering with company logo applied directly to the storefront windows.

### Carrara Glass Panels

To continue to unify the storefront area salvaged Carrara glass panels could be obtained to replace the missing pieces on the storefront bulkhead. If the actual panels cannot be acquired, then a glossy black enamel paint in the areas where the glass is missing will help to diminish the appearance of the blank areas.

### Storefront Display Windows

During the site visit there was a significant amount of condensation on the interior of the storefront windows. These should be evaluated to make sure the seals are not broken and they are weather tight. If a customer cannot see into the business because of fogged windows, they will be less likely to enter. As the storefront is the primary pedestrian interaction with the building, a unified and consistent appearance is important.

### Other Changes

Other simple changes to the storefront include marking the step up to reduce tripping, and replacing the floor covering at the recessed entry. The historic glass and wood door should be retained. Though the door to the second floor is new, a more appropriate commercial style door would enhance the storefront and maintain the commercial sense of the area, rather than a residential style door. Alternatively, the door could be painted a darker color to blend in with the black trim.

## Upper Façade & North Wall

Windows at the second level should be removed and replaced with windows to closely match the original window. One original window remains and can be used as an example to mimic the configuration of additional new windows. The configuration of the windows is somewhat unique with a four-pane transom and vertically divided (rather than horizontally

divided) window unit. Because this is an important feature to the building and contributes to its original character this configuration should be replicated in new window units. The cladding material, added at a later date, should be retained. Removing this material would most likely cause additional damage to the storefront itself.

The exposed brick north wall should be evaluated by structural engineer. Identify any active issues such as water infiltration from the roof, clogged roof drains, inappropriate sloping toward the wall, etc. and repair. Consider covering the damaged brick with stucco (DryVit) or metal paneling to protect the damaged material and preserve the building.

## Additional Recommendations/Funding

Schuyler has several funding sources that could provide financial assistance to any renovation work at this property. Among these are the Façade and Building Improvement Fund and the Commercial Building Program. Additionally, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides funds for renewable energy and energy efficiency improvements that could contribute to addressing more efficient storefront windows.





Current Condition



Possible Improvements

(option 1) double hung  
Replacement windows that fill  
the original window opening  
height



Possible Improvements

(option 2) replacement  
windows that more closely  
match what was there  
historically and that fill the  
original window opening  
height

# Case Study #3

Schuyler Grocery  
1116 B Street

# Visual Observations

This one-story commercial bay has a flat roof with glazed block cladding the upper portion of the façade. Brick veneer infilled walls (of the former storefront area) flank paired glazed aluminum pedestrian doors with aluminum sidelights. Rectangular panels with arched tops flank either side of the entry doors. The building is identified as a non-contributing resource to the Downtown Schuyler Historic District.

A printed vinyl banner sign has been attached to the façade above the entry doors. Ghosting on the glazed tile above the storefront area is evident where a former full-width canopy extended across the façade.



# Recommendations

## Façade & Storefront

### Canopy

Because this is a simple and unadorned façade, returning the metal canopy across the main elevation is recommended. Not only will this shelter some of the non-historic brick infill, but it will also provide shade and comfort to the customers. A canopy will unify the storefront and offer a distinct and defined area for the storefront.

### Building Maintenance

Maintenance issues that may be causing damage to the façade should be evaluated and identified. These include bad or clogged roof drains, leaking roof, inappropriate sloping to the parapet walls and climate control systems. Once any needed repairs or active water infiltration has been identified and addressed, the glazed tile should be repaired. A Preservation Brief created by the National Park Service offers detailed process to repair the damaged tile at the façade. Additionally, any mortar that needs repair or is missing should be re-pointed, following the Preservation Briefs.

### Visibility and Transparency

Access to the interior should be clear and welcoming to customers. Nice laser cut vinyl lettering could be applied to the front door with business information including store hours and phone number. Remove existing signs and notices posted to the front door. Removing this sign clutter will provide a clear visual to the interior. Move the cake cooler and other interior display items away from the door so it does not block the storefront window. If double doors are present, both doors should be unlocked and usable for customers. Large graphics or artwork could be placed in the arched recessed brick features at either side of the door. Create a bulletin board inside the doors where flyers can be posted.

### Signage

A new sign that extends across the façade above the storefront at an appropriate scale to the building will improve the appearance and clearly identify the business. The green and white sign proposed is a reference to the historic sign formerly on the building.



Current Condition



Possible Improvements

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# Case Study #4

Ultimate Image  
313 East 11th Street

# Visual Observations

This one-story brick commercial block has a stepped parapet ornamented with stone and yellow dentillated bricks cap the building. The original deeply recessed storefront opening fills the primary (north) façade.

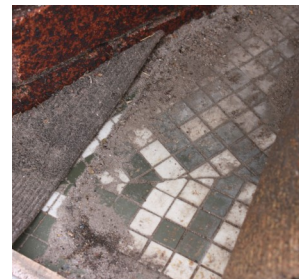
There is a significant slope from the entry door to the sidewalk and original historic tile remains under the carpet.

Non-historic aluminum display windows fill the space within the original copper storefront window frame.

The main entry is an aluminum glazed door with transom and sidelights. The transom area has been infilled with vinyl clad or steel sheeting. The small brick façade is highly ornamented with raised brick and stone detailing.

A simple one-room interior houses the main salon business. The back or storage area in the building has a full-height pressed metal ceiling. The back side of the building is accessed by the alley and has a small drive with parking spaces and a second entry.

The building is identified as a contributing resource to the Downtown Schuyler Historic District.



# Recommendations

## Façade & Storefront

### **Façade and Parapet**

The ornamented façade appears to have some drainage issues as much of the mortar is deteriorated or missing and the parapet wall appears to be bowing. A structural engineer/architect should be consulted to identify any structural issues and assess drainage or water infiltration into the parapet wall. Once the source of the damage has been identified, it should be remedied prior to any other work on the building. A Preservation Brief is provided that identifies methods used for this process.

### **Transom Window Opening and Possible Awning**

The transom window above the storefront could be an asset to the business and provide additional natural light into the commercial space. Investigate what is behind the sheeting cover the transom and if the transom could be replaced. If transom is in place, any missing glass pieces should be repaired, replaced and transom re-opened. If the covering is left in place, it could be painted a color that more closely matches the façade. A new fabric awning could extend across the façade in bold colors that match the corporate identity of the tenant. Black and white stripe awning installed over the enclosed transom area would shelter the sheeting covering the transom. In this case the transom infill would remain in place. Reconsider if the transom is opened and repaired/restored.

### **Entryway Tile Floor**

Original multi-color mosaic tile flooring remains in-tact under the carpet within the recessed entryway. The carpet should be removed, the tile repaired and left in place. Replace and/or repair any missing tiles, re-grout if necessary and leave exposed. A runner type removable carpet should be added if the floor becomes slippery in wet/cold environment. Consult the Preservation Brief on tile floors provided in the resource section at the back of this report.

## Rear Alley Façade and Area

The back of the building could be utilized to provide a secondary client entrance that is safe and accessible. The back room has a full-height elaborate pressed-metal ceiling that should be retained. A new exterior door at the back with some transparency could be added to identify the business and confirm this as an accessible entrance to the property. To fully utilize the storage area in the back of the building, a knee wall could be constructed that would identify the path to the salon as well as preserve the storage space. To further enhance the back entrance a small outdoor seating area and simple railing like a pipe rail could be constructed around the door. Other additions could include a fence to separate the parking area from the outdoor seating area and back entrance as well as additional signage and lighting to the back entrance. Clients could then enter at grade, travel through the building (enjoying the elaborate historic ceiling) and enter the salon without having to traverse the slope at the front door, especially on rainy, wet, or icy days.





Current Condition



### Possible Improvements

#### Uncovered storefront transom window

- Option 1 (top) plain glass transom
- Option 2 (bottom) prism glass transom

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Possible Improvements with various canvas awning colors

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Current Condition



Possible Improvements

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# Resources

## Preservation Briefs

Preservation Brief 2: Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings  
<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/2-repoint-mortar-joints.htm>

Preservation Brief 3: Improving Energy Efficiency in Historic Buildings  
<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/3-improve-energy-efficiency.htm>

Preservation Brief 6: Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings  
<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/6-dangers-abrasive-cleaning.htm>

Preservation Brief 7: The Preservation of Historic Glazed Architectural Terra-Cotta  
<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/7-terra-cotta.htm>

Preservation Brief 9: The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows  
<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/9-wooden-windows.htm>

Preservation Brief 12: The Preservation of Historic Pigmented Structural Glass (Vitrolite and Carrara Glass)  
<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/12-structural-glass.htm>

Preservation Brief 22: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stucco  
<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/22-stucco.htm>

Preservation Brief 24: Heating, Ventilating, and Cooling Historic Buildings—Problems and Recommended Approaches  
<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/24-heat-vent-cool.htm>

Preservation Brief 39: Holding the Line: Controlling Unwanted Moisture in Historic Buildings  
<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/39-control-unwanted-moisture.htm>

Preservation Brief 44: The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings, Repair, Replacement and New Design  
<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/44-awnings.htm>

Preservation Brief 47: Maintaining the Exterior of Small and Medium Size Historic Buildings  
<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/47-maintaining-exterior.htm>

## Preservation Tech Notes

01: Repair and Reproduction of Prismatic Glass Transoms

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/tech-notes/Tech-Notes-Glass01.pdf>

## Other Publications

A Glossary of Historic Masonry Deterioration Problems and Preservation Treatments

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/preservedocs/Historic-Masonry-Deterioration.pdf>

Weatherizing and Improving the Energy Efficiency of Historic Buildings

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/sustainability/energy-efficiency/weatherization.htm>