

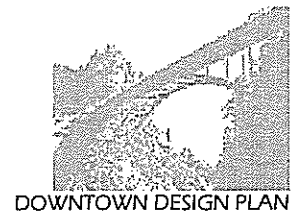
DOWNTOWN DESIGN PLAN

# TOWN OF RED CLIFF, COLORADO MASTER PLAN

## Section 5 DOWNTOWN DESIGN PLAN

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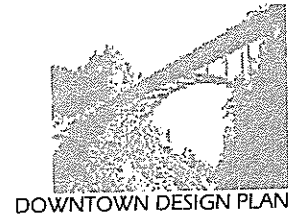


DOWNTOWN DESIGN PLAN

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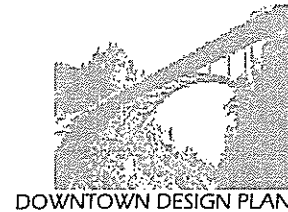
### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section is to explore the problems and potential of Downtown Red Cliff as well as to outline design criteria that will reinforce and enhance what exists while providing direction for future development or redevelopment. Strategies to implement this plan are discussed in Section 6.

In the past, downtown Red Cliff served as a focal point of community life by providing cultural and entertainment activities, certain shopping opportunities, and an important transportation hub for the railroad and overland stagecoach from Leadville to Minturn to Eagle and Denver. Today it is essential that the strength and vitality of the downtown be improved not only because of its importance as a historic commercial center from the days of the mining industry but because of its potential to generate increased commercial, tax and tourism revenues, a critical determinant to the financial health of Red Cliff.

While it is unlikely the downtown will develop into a major retail center. With strong local support, a convenience-oriented downtown with related small scale specialty services catering to the local people as well as tourists, is not unrealistic. By maintaining the downtown as the central focus of the community; preserving and enhancing historic spaces and building; improving the pedestrian environment; and providing adequate, convenient parking and circulation, the sense of community in Red Cliff will be strongly reinforced.

For the purpose of this plan, the Downtown Design Plan is divided into three distinct areas: The Water Street Performance District, The Downtown Performance District, and Eagle Street Performance District. The remaining six districts are designated as transitional districts and will be incorporated into the design guidelines. The Water Street District, The Downtown District, and Eagle Street District become established. (Map 21 delineates the boundaries of each area). The Downtown District is the center for the community. The downtown core includes the existing concentration of commercial uses as a various areas that have been identified for future expansion or development. Water Street District and Eagle Street District complement the Downtown District with supporting mix of residential and commercial uses.



## 5.2 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Water Street District is the entrance and exit into and out of Red Cliff. The district frames the beautiful and dramatic views setting the stage for entering the town. Eagle Street District is an extension of the Downtown District with a mix of commercial and residential. The district captures the Eagle River and the riparian zone as it travels into and through the Downtown District turning into the Water Street District and following a rugged watercourse and steep sharp cliffs as it leaves the district and the Town traveling north.

Other significant characteristics of the downtown which contribute to its images and impact are:

Architecturally, the downtown does not conform to any particular period style. Although some residents have expressed a desire for Victorian, the area exhibits its own “vernacular” style, a generally pleasing conglomeration of varied architectural elements. The variety of styles from the 1900’s (recently built) to the 1920’s to the late 1960’s and up to 2000 is interesting, although they could potentially become distracting.

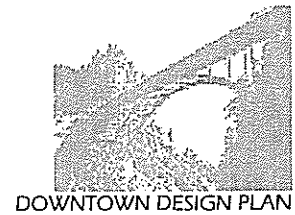
The surrounding mountains influence the downtown’s image by providing pleasing views and enriching the community’s image.

Recently built residential condominiums, apartments and restaurant are essential elements of the downtown since they should serve as models for private development.

Overhead utility wires intrude on the mountain views as well as the overall visual character of the downtown area.

The present downtown is primarily oriented to the automobile. Parking appears as extensions of the roadway shoulder. All parking is parallel where there is curb and there are no designated parking lots or spaces assigned for public parking. There are virtually no pedestrian amenities and provisions for separating pedestrians from vehicles except along the shoulder or intermittent non standard built sidewalks.

There are no pleasing outside places for people to sit, socialize, or just enjoy the downtown with the exception of the post office.



## **5.3 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

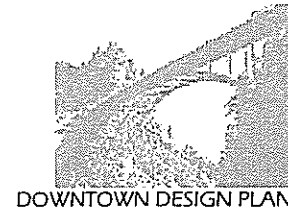
The following downtown goals and objectives were adopted by the Citizens Advisory Committee.

### **5.3.1 Goals**

1. The expansion of opportunities for shopping, socializing, business, entertainment, and housing to enhance the economic viability and health of the entire community.
2. The establish a “sense of place” that strengthens a family community, pride and identity
3. The provision of a safe and attractive place where the family can carry out their daily errands, socialize, and better relate to the community on a personal basis.
4. The creation of a pleasant visual environment which relates to the pedestrian as well as the automobile, keeping in mind the goal of preserving the history and encouraging tourism.
5. The protection, development, and enhancement of those natural, historical, and architectural resources of downtown which give it a unique character.

### **5.3.2 Objectives**

1. Enhance the overall unique character that is a sum of the community’s scenery, buildings, history, and natural features which will be appealing to both residents and tourists.
2. Develop an attractive, unified pedestrian environment throughout the downtown area.
3. Protect and enhance the existing historically and architecturally significant structures through restoration and compatible new construction.
4. Provide for necessary parking facilities and circulation needs.
5. Encourage medium to low density housing to locate in proximity to the downtown.



6. Establish a unified architectural and design context which is sympathetic to the existing character and diversity, but brings a cohesive feeling to the downtown.

## **5.4 PROPOSED LAND USE**

The Downtown Design Plan as shown on Map 22 illustrates the proposed land use for downtown Red Cliff and is intended as a guide for the elected and appointed officials when reviewing land use requests.

### **5.4.1 Downtown District**

The downtown core is recommended to be a key commercial area in Red Cliff. The emphasis in this area should be with promoting ground floor retail uses and home occupations. Residential development over or behind shops is highly recommended as a way to build a strong community feeling in this area. Work areas in these shops should be visible to some extent for educational purposes to shoppers, besides creating an informal handicraft atmosphere. Mixed among these shops should be establishments that are capable of catering to local and tourist needs. Incentives should be considered by the town to attract commercial and retail.

The downtown core should be oriented toward pedestrian related retail frontage. The amount of non-commercial frontage should be minimized. Combined and well integrated parking to serve several establishments is highly recommended. The Parking areas should also be landscaped and buffered to integrate with the surrounding uses.

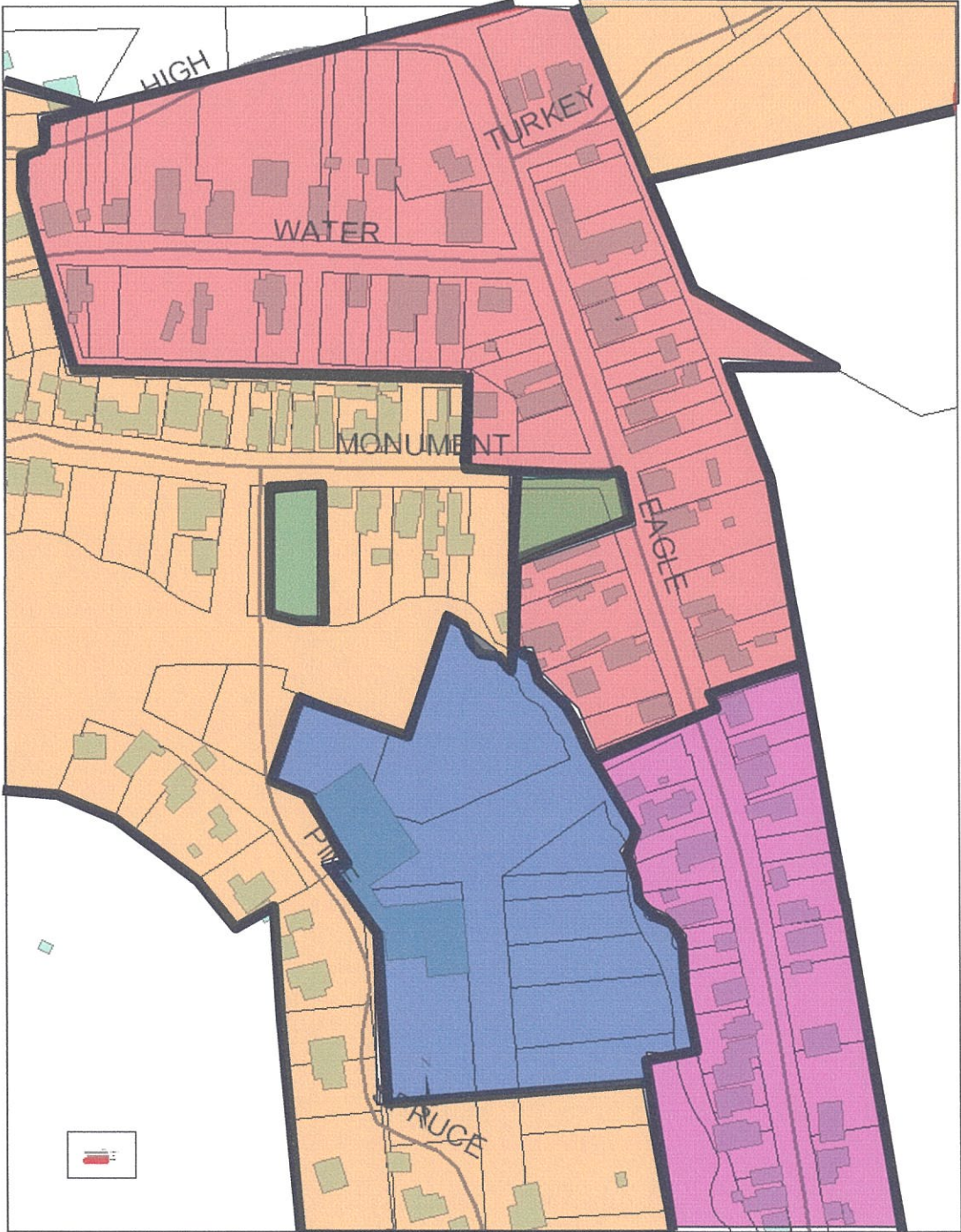
It is important the downtown core improve its image as a center of commercial activities. The building façade is an integral part of the streetscape. The downtown core should be well-designed. Architectural features wherever possible should tie commercial buildings into a cohesive district. Where possible, relate entries, window lines and sign bands to adjacent buildings.

Use materials that complement the area's character in terms of color, scale and texture. Use patterns that provide scale and interest and relate to existing patterns in the neighborhood. At the edge of the neighborhood, commercial district, relate to the adjoining residential neighborhood in terms of scale architectural detail and construction materials.

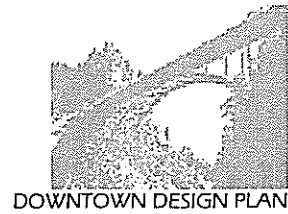


**MAP 21: DOWNTOWN LAND USE PLAN**

DOWNTOWN DESIGN PLAN



- MIXED USE – TOWN CENTER
- MIXED USE – NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL
- PUBLIC FACILITIES – OFFICE COMPLEX
- PARKS/OPEN SPACE
- R-1 RESIDENTIAL



Building facades should closely align and create a continuous façade, punctuated by store entrances and windows. This attracts and encourages the pedestrian to continue along the street.

There are four general terms; Pattern, Alignment, Window size, and Shape, that are used to identify the relationships of historical buildings and the spaces they occupy. These terms are used to qualify architecture that's historical in nature.

- **Pattern:** When patterns formed by building materials repeat throughout a neighborhood, they contribute to a sense of visual cohesiveness.

- **Windows:** Signs, columns, ornamentation, and other façade elements also create patterns that unify the look of a building or series of buildings.

- **Alignment:** Buildings on a historical main street seem to form one continuous wall because one of the major reasons is the alignment of façade elements such as cornices along the tops of the buildings that line up almost exactly.

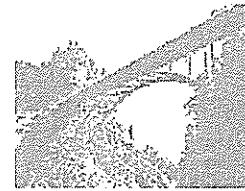
- **Size and Shape:** Similarity contributes to visual continuity. In looking for continuity or similarity, it's helpful to break the idea of size into separate but equal parts of height, width, and depth. Many historical buildings have different shapes or store fronts but are the same scale or size.

In order to duplicate this success of every business benefiting from the drawing power of its neighbors, a sense of linkage or relationship between businesses and other downtown functions must be promoted. For example, when customers stop at the gas station, they should feel comfortable walking to the restaurant for a cup of coffee and stopping at the post office. This sense of linkage between adjacent businesses may be fostered by strengthening or introducing common design elements to the existing establishments, and by installing sidewalks that are standard in design and materials.

#### 5.4.2 Water Street District

This area is transitional and consists primarily of low to medium density housing supportive of and compatible with the downtown core. The Water Street District is presently zoned R-1. An important factor in maintaining a viable downtown in Red Cliff is to encourage a live in population. Residential users in proximity to the downtown tend to keep the area active throughout





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the weekends and weekdays and, provide a modest built in market for convenience goods.

The Town should encourage infill residential uses in the Water Street District. The Planning Questionnaire and Walking Tour Visual Preference Survey preferred Single family homes adjacent to the downtown core that will create a stabilizing influence. Redevelopment emphasis should be on revitalization and enhancement, compatible with existing features of the existing uses.

### **5.4.3 Eagle Street District**

Another transitional district to the downtown is the Eagle Street District, although similar in composition to the Water Street District it differs by its proximity to the downtown. It's currently zoned Mixed-Use/Neighborhood Commercial. Due to this close relationship with the downtown, adequate off street parking, compatible building heights, consistent exterior materials and other applicable features should be similar with the downtown core area. The Eagle Street District contains the original town hall and some of the first structures built when the town was originally platted. There is a wide mix of uses from repair shops to multifamily to single family uses. Architectural styles range from historical log cabins to 1940 through 1980. Many structures are wood frame with a variety of outside material from plywood, clap siding, to stucco. There are some sidewalks and most of the parking is adjacent to the building.

## **5.5 DESIGN CRITERIA**

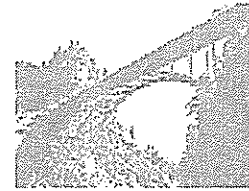
This section in conjunction with the Downtown Design Plan established design criteria that should be used by:

The town when planning or designing aesthetic improvements to the downtown.

The private sector when designing plans and documents for new or rehabilitation construction in the downtown.

Town officials when reviewing development application in the downtown.

The downtown design criteria are intended as mechanisms to ensure that new construction is compatible and sensitive to existing structures. They are not aimed at dictating the design of any one particular historic period or disallowing imaginative building and streetscape treatments. The design



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criteria are divided into nine general categories: Streetscape, Landscaping, Pedestrian walkways, Street Lighting, Seating, Additional pedestrian features, Parking, Architecture, and Signage. Building location and functional site characteristics are determined by existing town ordinances and excluded from discussion.

### 5.5.1 Streetscape

The streetscape is the major structuring component of this plan, and perhaps the most important in meeting the physical design goals of the community. The streetscape is composed of:

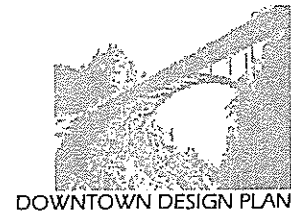
- Public rights of way such as streets, alleys, parking lots, sidewalks plaza, and parks
- The buildings that line the street
- The spaces created by public rights of way and buildings
- Landscaping
- Signage
- Site furnishings
- Lighting

The following design recommendations are intended to achieve the goals and objective of this plan while improving and enhancing the streetscape.

### 5.5.2 Landscaping

The easiest and most effective way to beautify the downtown is by landscaping. Planting hardy varieties of street trees provides an attractive setting for commercial and residential expansion. Tree cover gives a feeling of permanence to the downtown besides providing shade and an attractive visual impression. Trees also help form a visual canopy that provides a sense of enclosure to a walkway.

Shade trees should be planted and spaced uniformly in order to establish rhythm and create continuity within the downtown. Street trees, for example, cottonless cottonwood or Siberian Elm provide vegetative scale compatible with pedestrian space and are hardy in this altitude. Street trees that are shade providing should be planted along the streets and walkways in the downtown. Individual business owners should be encouraged to plant trees and install planters on their property and maintain them by pruning, weeding and watering the plants and perennials.



Landscape planters and window boxes articulate space and enrich the streetscape. When sidewalks/walkways are constructed in the downtown simple on-grade planter areas or raised planters should be installed. Such planters are relatively maintenance free while separating plant material from pedestrian and vehicle traffic. Suggested plantings may consist of ground covers, flowers, low shrubbery, or dry landscaping. The planter areas may be kept flat or contoured with shaped earth. The size of the planting may range from small accents to large focal areas, and may be easily integrated with street trees.

The landscape program should be prioritized accordingly:

Priority 1 – Planting street trees along both sides of Eagle Street beginning at the north entrance of town from High Street to the bridge crossing the Eagle River in the Eagle Street Performance District at the south end of town. Design Guideline 1 illustrates a conceptual streetscape for the Downtown Core along Eagle Street.

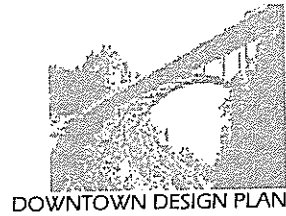
Priority 2 – Landscaping around the corner of the Post Office at the Eagle Street and Water Street intersect then continuing west along Water Street approximately 1,000 feet or where Water Street curves south west as it leaves the downtown core.

### **5.5.3 Pedestrian Pathways**

Perhaps the critical deficiency in the downtown core, as stated in the Planning Questionnaire and Walking Tour Visual Preference Survey is the lack of defined sidewalks and sidewalk system separating the pedestrians from automobiles. Such a system encourages pedestrian circulation and reduces potential safety hazards. This will become more obvious as the downtown core begins to rebuild and additional traffic will filter through the Eagle Street /Water Street and Eagle Street/Monument Street intersections. Due to the extreme climate and snow accumulations walkways should be constructed of concrete. Priority sidewalk and walkway construction is as follows:

Priority 1 – Along Eagle Street at the Corner of High Street and Eagle Street north of the downtown core to the intersection at Monument Street.

Priority 2 – At the intersection of Eagle Street and Water Street then continuing west approximately 500 feet to Cliff Alley.



Priority 3 – Beginning at the Monument Street and Eagle Street intersection to the bridge crossing the Eagle River in the Eagle Street Performance District at the south end of town.

Priority 4 – At the intersection of Cliff Alley and Water Street then continuing west along Water Street approximately 500 feet or where Water Street curves south west as it leaves the downtown core.

Eventually, sidewalks should be constructed on all the streets in the downtown core and through the transitional areas in the Water Street Performance District and Eagle Street Performance District. Once complete, the sidewalks will link to a community wide pedestrian system that includes Spruce Street, Water Street and High Street to the town limits. A bike path and separate pedestrian walkway could be proposed along the Union Pacific Railroad grade once the status of the railroad is determined. Further recommendations relating to a pedestrian/bike system are proposed in Section 6.

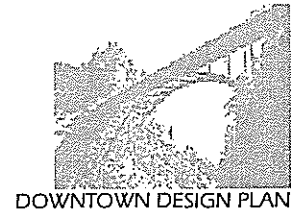
#### **5.5.4 Street Lighting**

Appropriate street lighting at a human scale reinforce street unity and add a special nighttime quality. The recommended design height for street lights is 10' to 12'. In addition, lighting designed as a pleasant experience with sufficient illumination for walks will assist in increasing pedestrian safety.

The design of street lights should be compatible with the character of the downtown core eventually continuing into the downtown transitional areas. Either "period" or contemporary style is acceptable. However, it is recommended that whatever the period style it should complement and not dominate the uniqueness of a mountain environment. Design guideline illustrates the visual effectiveness of the recommended street lights.

#### **5.5.5 Seating**

Another dimension of the streetscape is seating, an essential consideration for pedestrian relaxation. The addition of benches along the walkways and on the corners and in other selected locations is highly recommended. The benches should be comfortable, durable and complement the downtown environment. Simple wood contour benches with backs will complement Red Cliffs rustic environment and are recommended.



### **5.5.6 Additional Pedestrian Features**

Other functional features which are recommended for the downtown may include a kiosk, trash receptacles and bike racks. The kiosk, a community bulletin board for local events and attractions, should be located in a highly visible place. Trash receptacles should be coordinated with the benches and provided wildlife resistant covered tops and sealed bottoms and to keep refuse dry and out of sight. Bike racks should be provided near high use public buildings such as the post office.

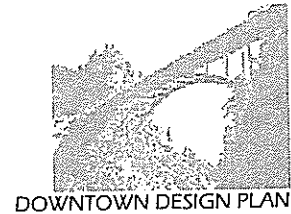
### **5.5.7 Parking**

Adequate parking is a primary necessity for downtown Red Cliff. As the downtown develops a commercial and convenience center, parking problems begin to emerge. Often these problems are more perceived than actual. For example, shoppers accustomed to parking directly in front of a store consider any other parking spaces as inconvenient. By providing convenient off-street parking areas, parking problems which occur as the downtown develops may be avoided. Customers who become familiar with walking short distances from their parking space will avoid later perceptions of parking “problems” as additional off-street parking becomes necessary.

Parking areas should be located and designed to encourage one-stop shopping. Off street parking on the side of buildings should be encouraged. Parking behind the buildings should also be encouraged if the lot and topography can accommodate the spaces. Where on street parking is necessary, it should be designed as parallel rather than angle parking. The latter requires excessively wide streets that detracts from the character of the downtown and can contribute to unsafe conditions as the driver backs up into oncoming traffic.

Landscaping and visual screening should be an integral part of parking lot design, both for shade and amenity value. Thought of tree placement should be determined. Dramatic views of the mountains and cliffs should not be concealed but strengthened. Screening the perimeter of a parking lot not only reduced noise and glare, but creates a barrier so vehicles use designated access points.

Public parking lots in the downtown area should be shared by multiple businesses and the standard zoning ordinance parking requirements may be waived.



Entrances into parking areas should be defined with certain design elements, such as curbs, landscaped borders to give a sense of arrival to businesses and the downtown. Cooperating businesses would adopt such a common design scheme to define parking areas, both the appearance of and linkage between businesses would be enhanced.

The town should explore the possibility of constructing a public parking area with a connection to the recommended downtown pedestrian system should be provided as shown on Map 13.

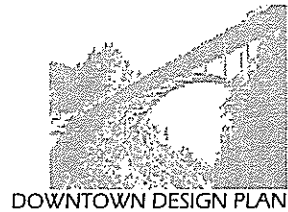
Vehicular circulation can be improved by physically defining the downtown intersections. Curbing is the best alternative but only if the streets are paved with a durable asphalt or concrete.

### **5.5.8 Architecture**

A varied character of appearance of the existing business establishments and public buildings is generally acceptable, and progress has been made in exterior appearances. The early mining character of the town comes through the many historic buildings and is a style, according to the Planning Questionnaire and Walking Tour Visual Preference Survey, the citizens would like to keep and compliment in new construction. The danger in having mixed group of existing structures is the compatibility opinions on new construction becomes difficult. For example, an acceptable style of architecture that's predominate in a community is used as a standard to determine if the proposed architectural style is compatible with the existing style and whether it conveys a certain consistency in appearance the Town wishes to promote.

To retain the small town appearance and feel of Red Cliff, it is important that the scale and general design characteristics of new construction reflect the town's history and natural western setting. Architectural style and detailing that is rustic, western, Victorian and regionally historical should be encouraged and maintained.

Modern architectural development should be discouraged in the downtown core and transitional areas. This does not mean that there cannot be innovation in design, but it does mean that if the general character is to be preserved, new construction cannot be so different in visual terms as to seem incongruous or visually jarring.



By imposing basic design controls, such as generally acceptable uniformity in signage, lighting, and window treatment, a high quality visual character can be preserved. Positive architectural elements should be considered in new construction or restoration include:

- Use of materials and colors compatible with nature or Victorian architecture.
- Regular placement of windows.
- Use of brick or stained lapsiding.
- Awnings and shutters.
- Western or false front buildings.
- Porches.

Features to be discouraged include:

- Corrugated siding
- Aluminum siding
- Incompatible colors

### **5.5.9 Signage**

Sign and shop fronts reflect the health of a community. In fact, signs often tell more about the economic health of an area than they do about the products being marketed. For example, commercial entry signs, parking signs, building identification signs, window signs for retail and commercial businesses, community and neighborhood identification signs contribute to appearance and feeling of a healthy community .

Colors, materials, sizes shapes, and lighting of signs should be compatible with the architecture of the building, the business it identifies, and the character of the surrounding area.