

## Appendix E

# Renovations and Adaptive Reuse of Older Buildings in Downtown Walla Walla

The City of Walla Walla Downtown Master Plan recommends a variety of improvement projects including new infill construction, additions to existing buildings and renovation and adaptive reuse. Guidelines for each of these work categories are contained in the City of Walla Walla Downtown Design Standards.

A primary goal of the Downtown Master Plan is to provide a framework for investment in which the traditional character of Downtown is enhanced, while accommodating economic revitalization and compatible development. One question is how existing buildings of historic value may be renovated and adapted for new uses. While some new infill construction is anticipated, it is quite likely that much of the improvement potential in the area lies in the continued reuse of the existing building stock. This is because existing buildings can often be renovated for less cost than a replacement structure and they can accommodate phased implementation as well as the limited budgets that some property owners may have. Some obstacles are perceived, however, that may limit the amount of renovation activity that may occur.

### The key issues are:

1. Understanding and providing accessibility requirements to upper floors
2. Relatively small leasable spaces that may be achieved
3. General building and safety code compliance
4. A perception that older spaces are less desirable

This paper presents two case studies that address these issues. They illustrate fundamental strategies for adaptive reuse that are readily applicable in Downtown Walla Walla.

### The key strategies are:

- Provide access to upper floors by designing additions that can incorporate stairs and elevators as needed that will meet current codes.
- Share exiting systems of two or more buildings to increase the percentage of the leasable building area that will result.
- Consider new uses that can maximize design opportunities and market appeal of older spaces.
- Renovate building exteriors to highlight unique design features to establish distinct market images.

Current building codes require two fire-rated exit stairs from an upper story, and depending upon the relationship of the use of the upper floor to that of the ground level, accessibility that meets the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act may also be required. This may involve installation of an elevator. When the space for these elements must be provided within the existing footprint of the older building, the net leasable space remaining on an upper floor is often so small as to be of limited function and the cost of providing the code-required exiting may be disproportionate to the potential income to be gained from improving the space. The result is that the upper floors are left vacant.

Two strategies should be considered to solve this problem. First, access/egress may be constructed at the rear of an existing building which include exit stairs and an elevator. This approach is tested in CASE STUDY A.

## CASE STUDY A:

Where a building presently does not extend the full depth of the lot, space may exist to add new access/egress components. In some cases, it may even be possible to construct an addition that can be shared by two or more properties. This will be feasible when lot configurations include additional depth that connects to a public right-of-way, such as a street or alley.

In some cases, it may be more cost effective to develop a master plan for several contiguous properties. Obviously this is easier to accomplish when all of the properties are under single ownership but joint development agreements could be produced and the City should facilitate such arrangements, whenever possible.

In this illustration, the third floor of the historic portion is quite tall, as is often the case in older buildings located Downtown. In the proposed adaptive use, this floor is used as housing in a "loft" format. As a result, a mezzanine is added, further increasing the amount of net leasable space. This also would result in a dramatic design with high market appeal.

### Estimated Development Area

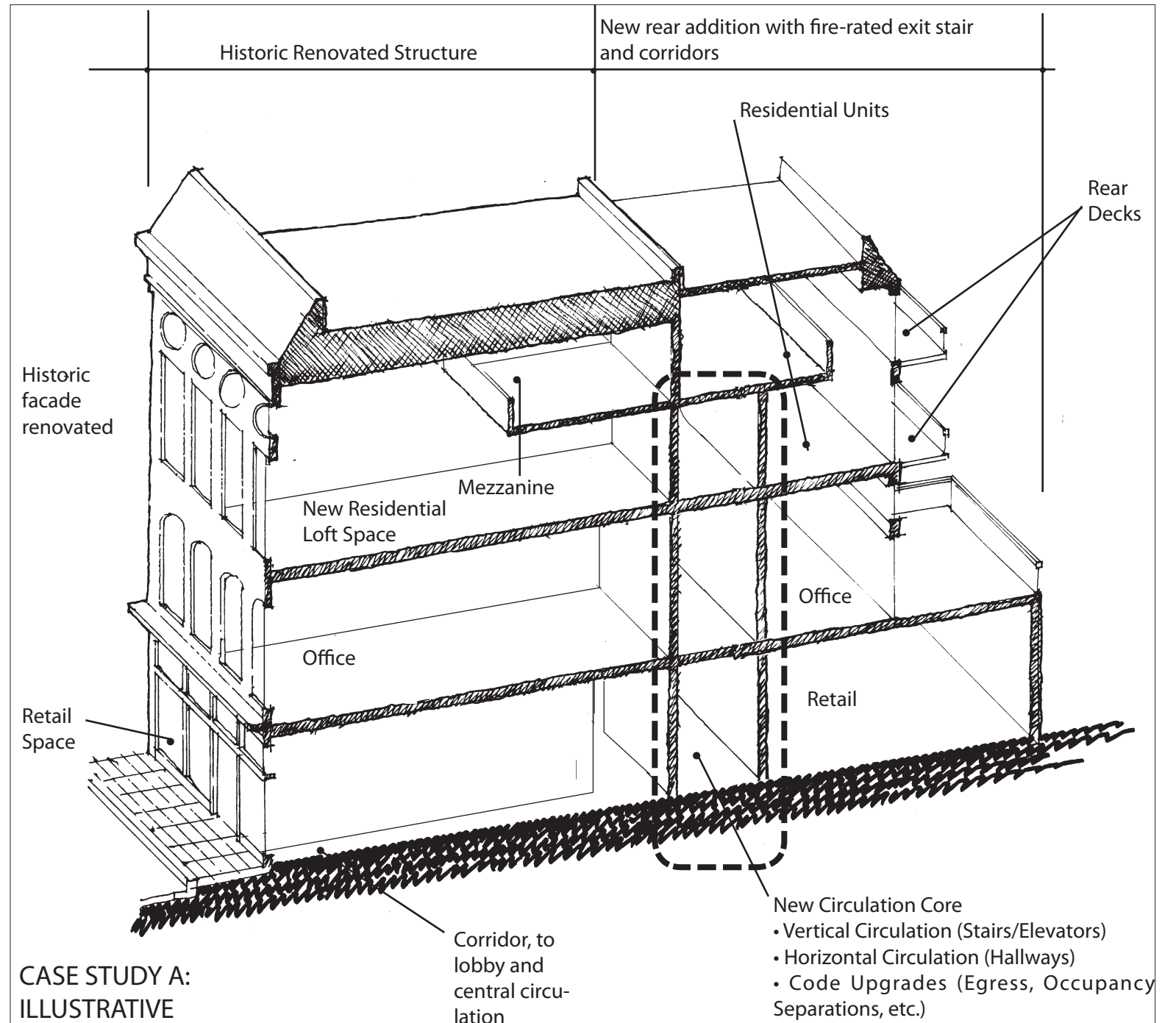
	Renovated Space	New Addition
Floor 1: Retail	1320 SF	Retail 980 SF
Floor 2: Office	1680 SF	Office 910 SF
Floor 3: Residential	2450 SF	Residential 1510 SF
Total =	5450 SF	Total =
	3400 SF	

### New Circulation Core:

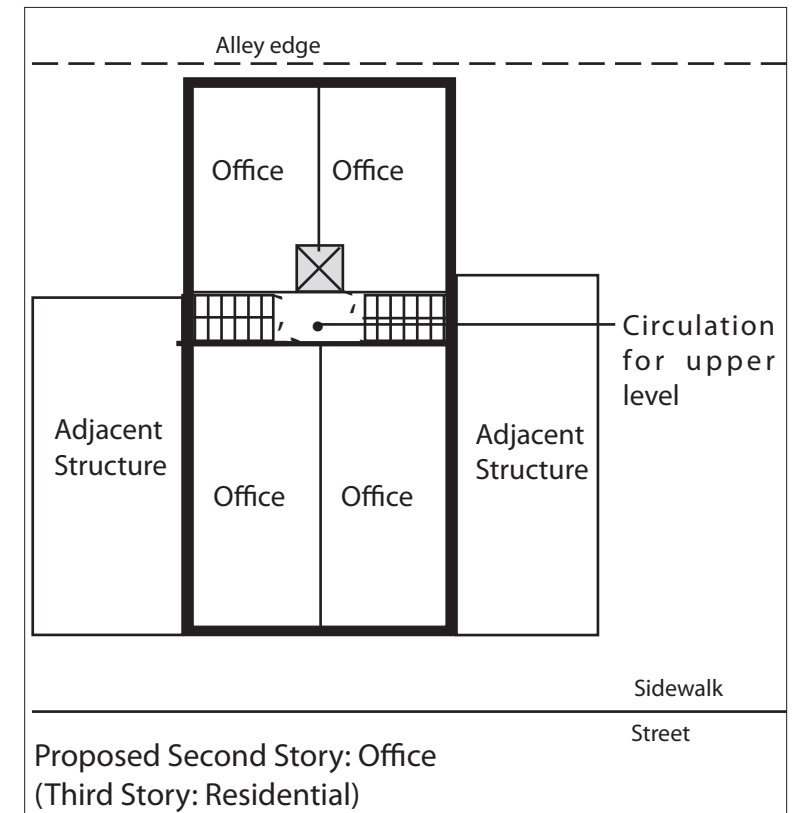
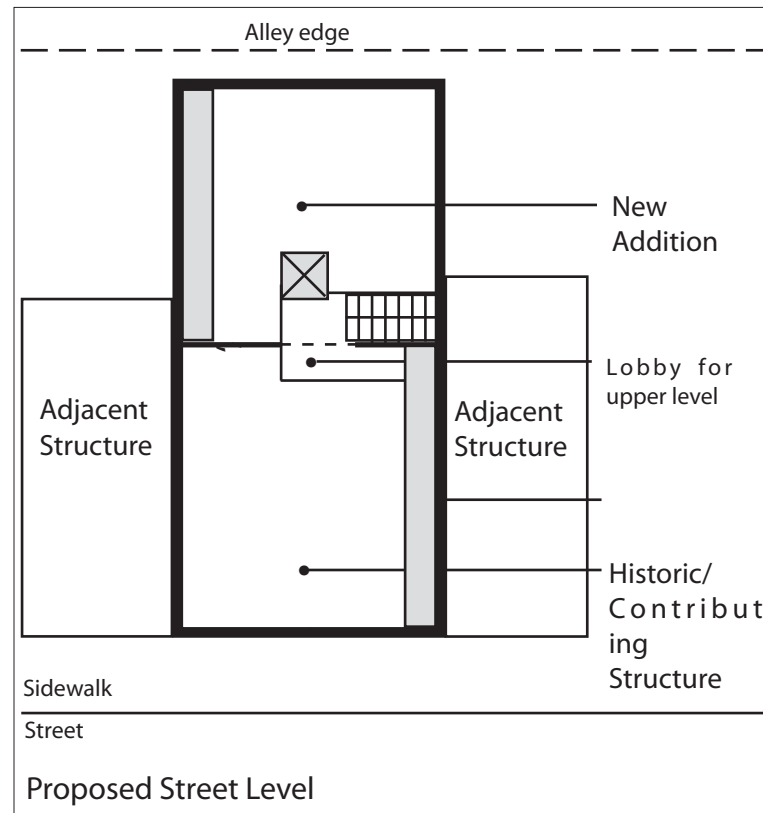
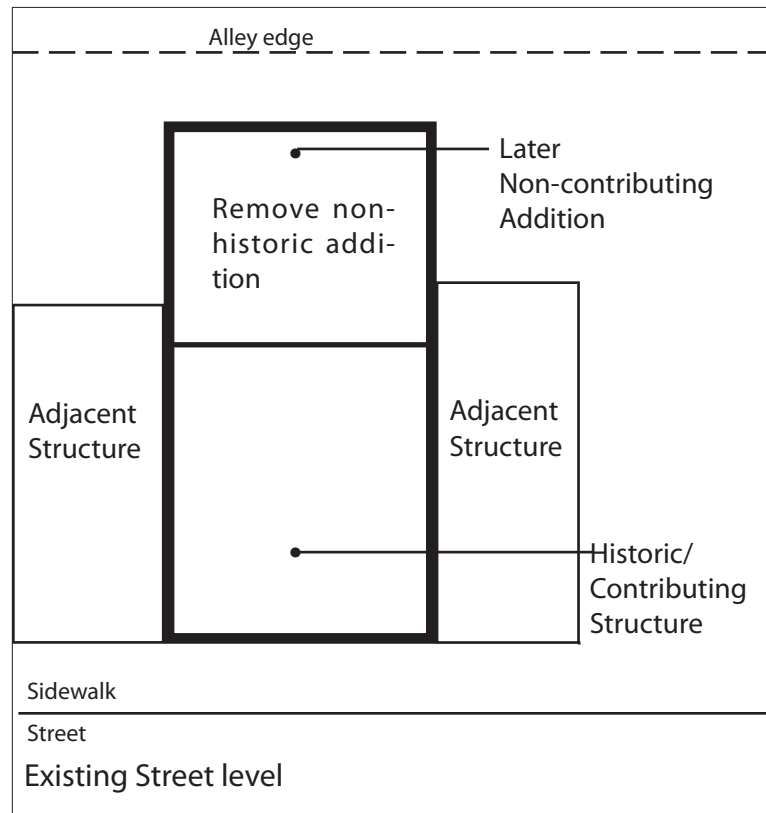
Floor 1 = 570 SF Floor 2 = 300 SF Floor 3 = 300 SF  
Total Circulation Core = 1070 SF

### Area Demolished: 1070 SF






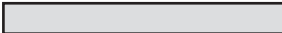
If the property, including the residential portions, are rented, then the Federal income tax credit and parking reduction could be used as incentives.



CASE STUDY A:  
SITE PLAN



Drawing Key

- Exit 
- Alley Edge 
- Elevator 
- Stair 
- Passage 
- Exit Corridor 

Existing Site Plan

This case study reflects a three-story historic structure that is built sidewall to sidewall on its property. It is flanked by two other structures with an alley to the rear. In some cases, a two-story rear addition exists, which was constructed at a later date and has no historic significance.

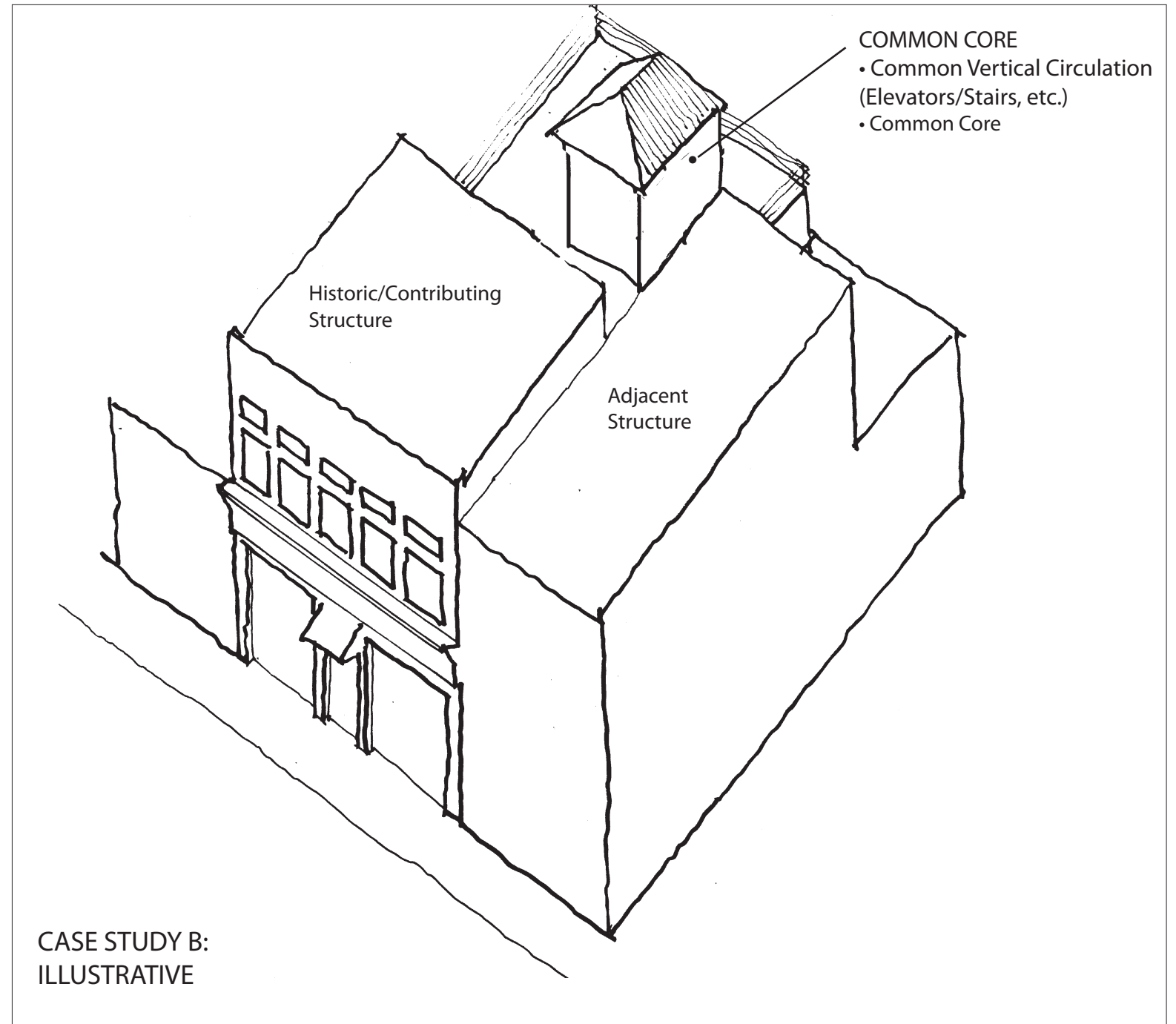
Proposed Site Plan

Lot depth and/or demolition of an existing non-contributing addition allows for a new three (or four) story addition for residential and/or office suite type use. A new common access/egress core is constructed, which will provide all necessary vertical and horizontal circulation between the existing historical structure and new development, if feasible OR the access/egress core is constructed without any additional building square footage. The core also allows for any necessary code upgrades of utilities as well as exits.

## CASE STUDY B:

The second strategy, which is somewhat similar, is to construct an exit stair that can be shared by two abutting properties, but this new stair (or access/egress core) is accommodated within the existing footprints of the buildings. Even though this does result in the reduction of leasable space, the overall percentage available to leasing increases proportionally, since the exit stair and elevator are shared. Specific technical design requirements must be satisfied to provide adequate fire ratings for the entire exiting system and sufficient separation of properties as needed, but the potential to do so does exist. This design is easier to accomplish when both properties are under single ownership but may still be a viable option when they are not if there is a shared access agreement.

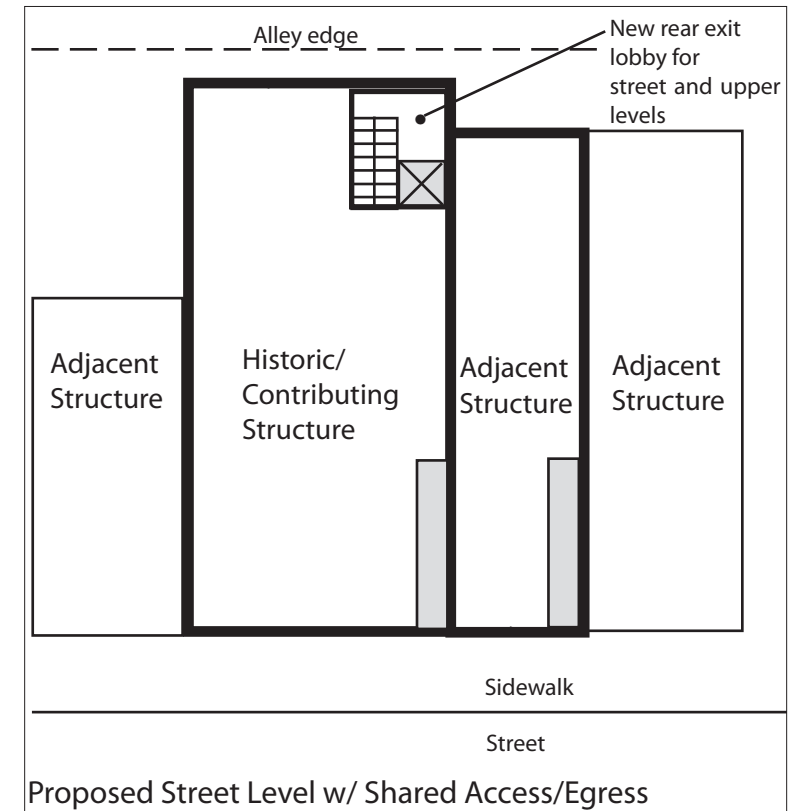
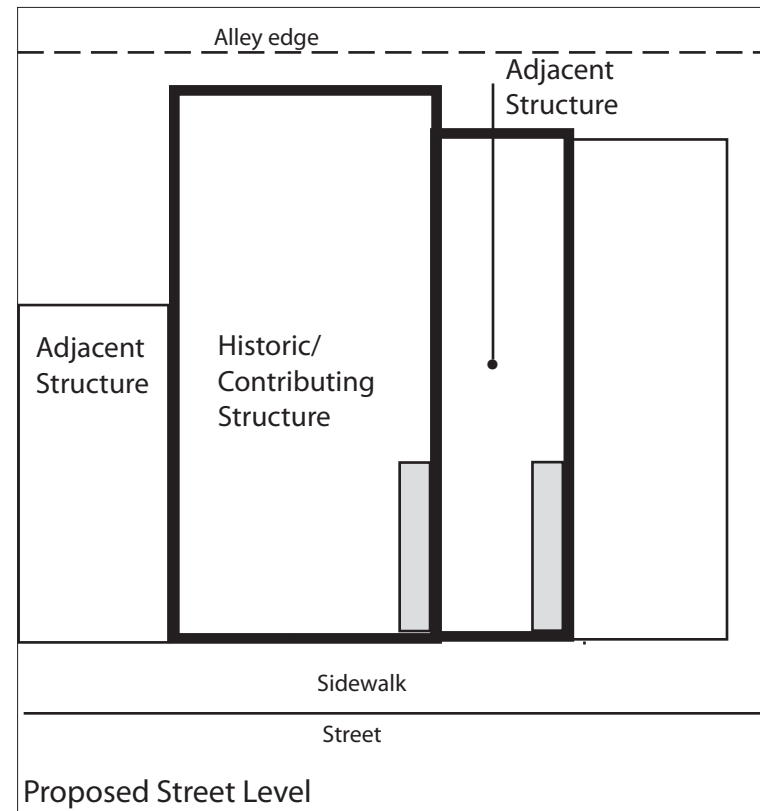
Another issue is to make creative use of older interior spaces. Many of the older buildings in Downtown have tall ceilings (see Case Study A Illustrative) that yield dramatic and marketable spaces when improved. In a few instances, these spaces are tall enough to permit introducing genuine lofts or mezzanines to increase usable space and to highlight the drama of these volumes. Even where heights are less than enough to introduce mezzanines, many still are substantially greater than the heights of spaces generally practicable in contemporary buildings. And these spaces also can yield dramatic results when improved. The key is to recognize the potential of these spaces and include functional design elements that enhance assets rather than ignore them.



Finally, a key goal is to renovate existing building fronts to highlight hidden historic attributes. Many structures in Downtown exhibit high quality materials, interesting ornamentation and detail and distinctive characteristics that are presently obscured or that have been altered to the extent that the potential visual impact is weakened.

The case studies illustrate opportunities to apply these strategies to existing buildings in a manner that enhances the economic viability of each property, while achieving the community's goal for revitalization that respects the traditional character of Downtown. These examples draw upon existing buildings on Main Street, but can also be abstracted to apply to various configuration and site constraints. Specific circumstances associated with the property may, in fact, preclude the application of some of these case studies. Nonetheless, as prototypes, these diagrams illustrate opportunities for resolving access and egress issues.

## CASE STUDY B: SITE PLAN



### Drawing Key

Exit	
Alley Edge	
Elevator	
Stair	
Exit Corridor	

### Existing Site Plan

This case study reflects a two story historic/contributing structure built sidewall to sidewall on the property. The existing historic structure is flanked by two other structures.

### Site Plan (proposed)

For this case study, the Owner owns or intends to purchase the adjacent structure which may or may not be contributing. A new shared circulation core is added, which will provide all necessary vertical and horizontal circulation between existing structures. The rear exit lobby will also allow for utility upgrades.