

Guidelines

< HOME >

Standards
Guidelines

Masonry
Wood
Metals

Roofs
Windows
Entrances/Porches
Storefronts

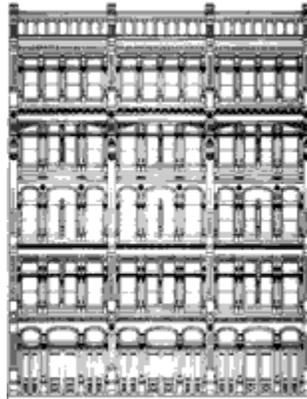
Structural Systems
Spaces/Features/Finishes
Mechanical Systems

Site
Setting

Energy
New Additions
Accessibility
Health/Safety

Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings

Introduction to the Guidelines



The **Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings** were initially developed in 1977 to help property owners, developers, and Federal managers apply the Secretary of the Interior's **Standards for Rehabilitation** during the project planning stage by providing general design and technical recommendations. Unlike the Standards, the Guidelines are not codified as program requirements.

Together with the Standards for Rehabilitation they provide a model process for owners, developers, and Federal agency managers to follow.

The Guidelines are intended to assist in applying the Standards to projects generally; consequently, they are not meant to give case-specific advice or address exceptions or rare instances. For example, they cannot tell owners or developers which features of their own historic building are important in defining the historic character and must be preserved--although examples are provided in each section--or which features could be altered, if necessary, for the new use. This kind of careful case-by-case decision-making is best accomplished by seeking assistance from qualified historic preservation professionals in the planning stage of the project. Such professionals include architects, architectural historians, historians, archeologists, and others who are skilled in the preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of the historic properties.

The Guidelines pertain to historic buildings of all sizes, materials, occupancy, and construction types; and apply to interior and exterior work as well as new exterior additions. Those approaches, treatments, and techniques that are consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation" are listed in **bold-face type** under the "

Recommended" section in each topic area; those approaches, treatments, and techniques which could adversely affect a building's historic character are listed in the "**Not Recommended**" section in each topic area.

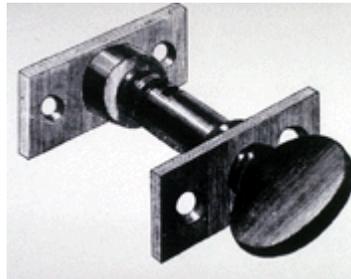
To provide clear and consistent guidance for owners, developers, and Federal agency managers to follow, the "Recommended" courses of action in each section are listed in order of historic preservation concerns so that a rehabilitation project may be successfully planned and completed--one that, first, assures the preservation of a building's important or "character-defining" architectural materials and features and, second, makes possible an efficient contemporary use. Rehabilitation guidance in each section begins with protection and maintenance, that work which should be maximized in every

Those approaches, treatments, and techniques that are consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are listed under the "Recommended" section in each topic area

project to enhance overall preservation goals. Next, where some deterioration is present, repair of the building's historic materials and features is recommended. Finally, when deterioration is so extensive that repair is not possible, the most problematic area of work is considered: replacement of historic materials and features with new materials.

To further guide the owner and developer in planning a successful rehabilitation project, those complex design issues dealing with new use requirements such as alterations and additions are highlighted at the end of each section to underscore the need for particular sensitivity in these areas.

How to Use The Guidelines



Identify, Retain, and Preserve

The guidance that is basic to the treatment of all historic buildings--**identifying, retaining, and preserving** the form and detailing of those architectural materials and features that are important in defining the historic character--is always listed first in the "Recommended" area. The parallel "Not Recommended" area lists the types of actions that are most apt to

cause the diminution or even loss of the buildings's historic character. It should be remembered, however, that such loss of character is just as often caused by the cumulative effect of a series of actions that would seem to be minor interventions. Thus, the guidance in *all* of the "Not Recommended" areas must be viewed in that larger context, e.g., for the total impact on a historic building.

The parallel "Not Recommended" area lists the types of actions that are most apt to cause the diminution or even loss of the buildings's historic character.

Protect and Maintain

After identifying those materials and features that are important and must be retained in the process of rehabilitation work, then **protecting and maintaining** them are addressed. Protection generally involves the least degree of intervention and is preparatory to other work. For example, protection includes the maintenance of historic material through treatments such as rust removal, caulking, limited paint removal, and re-application of protective coating; the cyclical cleaning of roof gutter systems; or installation of fencing, protective plywood, alarm systems and other temporary protective measures. Although a historic building will usually require more extensive work, an overall evaluation of its physical condition should always begin at this level.

Repair

Next, when the physical condition of character-defining materials and features warrants additional work **repairing** is recommended. Guidance for the repair of historic materials such as masonry, wood, and architectural metals again begins with the least degree of intervention possible such as patching, piecing-in, splicing, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing or upgrading them according to recognized preservation methods. Repairing also includes the limited replacement in kind--or with compatible substitute material--of extensively deteriorated or missing parts of features when there are surviving prototypes (for example, brackets, dentils, steps, plaster, or portions of slate or tile roofing). Although using the same kind of material is always the preferred option, substitute material is acceptable if the form and design as well as the

substitute material itself convey the visual appearance of the remaining parts of the feature and finish.

Replace

Following repair in the hierarchy, guidance is provided for **replacing** an entire character-defining feature with new material because the level of deterioration or damage of materials precludes repair (for example, an exterior cornice; an interior staircase; or a complete porch or storefront). If the essential form and detailing are still evident so that the physical evidence can be used to re-establish the feature as an integral part of the rehabilitation project, then its replacement is appropriate. Like the guidance for repair, the preferred option is always replacement of the entire feature in kind, that is, with the same material. Because this approach may not always be technically or economically feasible, provisions are made to consider the use of a compatible substitute material.



It should be noted that, while the National Park Service guidelines recommend the replacement of an entire character-defining feature under certain well-defined circumstances, they never recommend removal and replacement with new material of a feature that--although damaged or deteriorated--could reasonably be repaired and thus preserved.

Design for Missing Historic Features

When an entire interior or exterior feature is missing (for example, an entrance, or cast iron facade; or a principal staircase), it no longer plays a role in physically defining the historic character of the building unless it can be accurately recovered in form and detailing through the process of carefully documenting the historical appearance. Where an important architectural feature is missing, its recovery is always recommended in the guidelines as the



first or preferred, course of action. Thus, if adequate historical, pictorial, and physical documentation exists so that the feature may be accurately reproduced, and if it is desirable to re-establish the feature as part of the building's historical appearance, then designing and constructing a new feature based on such information is appropriate. However, a second acceptable option for the replacement feature is a new design that is compatible with the remaining character-defining features of the historic building. The new design should always take into account the size, scale, and

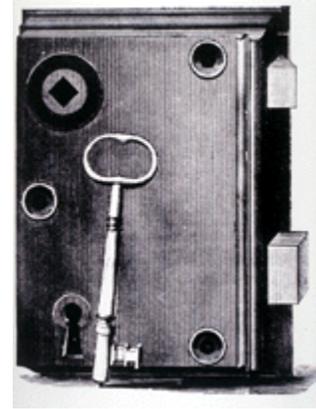
material of the historic building itself and, most importantly, should be clearly differentiated so that a false historical appearance is not created.

Alterations/Additions to Historic Buildings

Some exterior and interior alterations to historic building are generally needed

to assure its continued use, but it is most important that such alterations do not radically change, obscure, or destroy character-defining spaces, materials, features, or finishes.

Alterations may include providing additional parking space on an existing historic building site; cutting new entrances or windows on secondary elevations; inserting an additional floor; installing an entirely new mechanical system; or creating an atrium or light well. Alteration may also include the selective removal of buildings or other features of the environment or building site that are intrusive and therefore detract from the overall historic character.



The construction of an exterior addition to a historic building may seem to be essential for the new use, but it is emphasized in the guidelines that such new additions should be avoided, if possible, and considered only after it is determined that those needs cannot be met by altering secondary, i.e., non character-defining interior spaces. If, after a thorough evaluation of interior solutions, an exterior addition is still judged to be the only viable alternative, it should be designed and constructed to be clearly differentiated from the historic building and so that the character-defining features are not radically changed, obscured, damaged, or destroyed.

Additions to historic buildings are referenced within specific sections of the guidelines such as Site, Roof, Structural Systems, etc., but are also considered in more detail in a separate section, New Additions to Historic Buildings.

Energy Efficiency/Accessibility Considerations/Health and Safety Considerations

These sections of the rehabilitation guidance address work done to meet accessibility requirements and health and safety code requirements; or retrofitting measures to conserve energy. Although this work is quite often an important aspect of rehabilitation projects, it is usually not a part of the overall process of protecting or repairing character-defining features; rather, such work is assessed for its potential negative impact on the building's historic character. For this reason, particular care must be taken not to radically change, obscure, damage, or destroy character-defining materials or features in the process of rehabilitation work to meet code and energy requirements.



[Home](#) | [Next](#) | [Previous](#)