

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

The Secretary of the Interior is responsible for establishing standards for all programs under Department authority for advising Federal agencies on the preservation of historic properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. In partial fulfillment of this responsibility, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation Projects have been developed to direct work undertaken on historic buildings.

Initially used by the Secretary of the Interior in determining the applicability of proposed project work on registered properties within the Historic Preservation Fund grant-in-aid program, the Standards of Historic Preservation Projects have received extensive testing over the years -- more than 6,000 acquisition and development projects were approved for a variety of work treatments. In addition, the Standards have been used by Federal agencies in carrying out their historic preservation responsibilities for properties in Federal ownership or control; and by State and local officials in the review of both Federal and non-Federal rehabilitation proposals. They have also been adopted by a number of historic district and planning commissions across the country.

The Standards for Rehabilitation (36 CFR 67) comprise that section of the overall historic preservation project standards addressing the most prevalent treatment today: Rehabilitation. **"Rehabilitation" is defined as the process of returning a property to a state of utility, through repair or alteration, which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions and features of the property which are significant to its historic, architectural, and cultural values.**

The Standards for Rehabilitation are as follows:

1. Every reasonable effort shall be made to provide a compatible use for a property which requires minimal alteration of the building, structure, or site and its environment, or to use a property for its original intended purpose.
2. The distinguishing original qualities or character of a building, structure, or site and its environment shall not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible.
3. All buildings, structures, and sites shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis and which seek to create an earlier appearance shall be discouraged.
4. Changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building, structure, or site and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance shall be recognized and respected.
5. Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship which characterize a building, structure, or site shall be treated with sensitivity.
6. Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplications of features, substantiated by historic, physical, or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other buildings or structures.

7. The surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that will damage the historic building materials shall not be undertaken.
8. Every reasonable effort shall be made to protect and preserve archaeological resources affected by, or adjacent to any project.
9. Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural materials, and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the property, neighborhood or environment.
10. Wherever possible, new additions or alterations to structures shall be done in such a manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the structure would be unimpaired.

In the past several years, the most frequent use of the Secretary's "Standards for Rehabilitation" has been to determine if a rehabilitation project qualifies as a "certified rehabilitation" pursuant to the Tax Reform Act of 1976, the Revenue Act of 1978, and the Economic Recovery Act of 1981, as amended. The Secretary is required by law to certify rehabilitations that are "consistent with the historic character of the structure or the district in which it is located." The Standards are used to evaluate whether the historic character of a building is preserved in the process of rehabilitation. Between 1976 and 1982 over 5,000 projects were reviewed and approved under the Preservation Tax Incentives program.

As stated in the definition, the treatment "Rehabilitation" assumes that at least some repair or alteration of the historic building will need to take place in order to provide for an efficient contemporary use; however, these repairs and alterations must not damage or destroy the materials and features -- including their finishes -- that are important in defining the building's historic character.

In terms of specific project work, preservation of the building and its historic character is based on the assumption that (1) the historic materials and features and their unique craftsmanship are of primary importance, and (2) in consequence they will be retained, protected, and repairs in the process of rehabilitation to the greatest extent possible, not removed and replaced with materials and features which appear to be historic, but which are, in fact, new.

To best achieve these preservation goals, a two-part evaluation needs to be applied by qualified historic preservation professionals for each project as follows: First, a particular property's materials and features which are important in defining its historic character should be identified. Examples may include a building's walls, cornice, window sash, and frames and roof; rooms, hallways, stairs, and mantels; or a site's walkways, fences, and gardens. The second part of the evaluation should consist of assessing the potential impact of the work necessary to make possible an efficient contemporary use. A basic assumption in this process is that the historic character of each property is unique and therefore proposed rehabilitation work will necessarily have a different effect on each property; in other words, what may be acceptable for one project may be unacceptable for another. However, the requirement set forth in the definition of "Rehabilitation" is always the same for every project: those portions and features of the property which are significant to its historic, architectural, and cultural values must be preserved in the process of rehabilitation. To accomplish this, all ten of the Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation" must be met.