

The National Park Service, the division of the U.S. Department of the Interior where federal historic preservation programs are housed, has published ten standards for rehabilitation projects involving historic buildings. The standards were created by professional staff members at the National Park Service, based on extensive research into rehabilitation techniques, products, and philosophies. The standards guide both federal projects and those undertaken at the state and local levels, by public and private building owners, and they outline appropriate treatments and rehabilitation techniques for buildings of any age or type. The goal of the standards is to encourage rehabilitation of historic buildings in a way that makes them modern and functional while still retaining their essential historic character.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards are based on a two-part rehabilitation philosophy: 1) retention of original or historic building materials to the greatest extent possible; and 2) avoiding the creation of a false "historic" appearance. To achieve these two goals, the National Park Service, and most state and local preservation agencies and organizations, discourage removal of existing historic building elements unless they are so deteriorated that they cannot economically be repaired; and they discourage the installation of non-original decorative elements or salvaged historic architectural elements from other buildings. Historic building interiors are considered as important as exteriors and as worthy of sensitive treatment.

The basis of this preservation philosophy is that preservation has both real and intangible benefits, primarily the increased economic value and the higher quality of life that come with careful preservation of historic structures and their original character and materials.

There are several economic incentives and technical considerations that can help greatly in retaining both interior and exterior historic building materials. One of the most important is the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (see the appendix for more information). The economic impact of the Credit often can make it feasible to retain historic building materials that might otherwise be removed and replaced. Technical considerations favoring retention of historic materials include modern treatments such as epoxy consolidants that restore stability and structural strength to moisture- or insect-damaged wood elements; and Article 34 of the Ohio Basic Building Code (see the appendix for more information), which provides an alternative means for older buildings to meet modern life-safety codes by taking advantage of the often high levels of safety inherent in historic building materials and designs.

In reviewing proposed work, the Architectural Review Board of the City of Dublin uses the Criteria for Evaluation in Section 153.170 of the Dublin Planning and Zoning Code. The Historic Dublin guidelines in this book use the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation as a foundation, and these are consistent with the review criteria under the Dublin Planning and Zoning Code. Keep the standards in mind while reading through the guidelines and planning a rehabilitation project. Like the Secretary's Standards and the Planning and Zoning Code, the guidelines have been published with the goal of protecting and enhancing Historic Dublin's unique historic character. The Architectural Review Board does not review interior alterations but, consistent with current practice and philosophy, it encourages the retention of historic interior features.

The standards pertain to historic buildings of all materials, construction types, and sizes, and they are concerned with both the exteriors and the interiors of historic buildings. The standards also encompass related landscape features and the building's site and environment as well as attached, adjacent or related new construction. Compliance with the standards is mandatory for projects using the 20 percent Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (see appendix), but they are useful for anyone interested in preserving a building's character during rehabilitation.

It is important to remember that variations from the standards can be acceptable, but only when it is shown that there are compelling technical, financial, or programmatic reasons for the variation. One such reason might be a lack of skilled contractors to do difficult restoration work; another might be extensive deterioration that makes repair of existing windows significantly more expensive than replacing them.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
 2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
 3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
 4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
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5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

What does this mean in practical terms? In general, it means retaining sound older building materials, ornamentation, and details; and avoiding changes that cause removal or alteration of such elements. When such features are deteriorated, it means replacing them with new ones as close to the originals as possible, preferably in the same materials. It means making changes in a sensitive way – constructing additions that do not overwhelm the original building and that are clearly secondary to it; avoiding gratuitous removal of trim and details, especially during roofing or siding projects; and resisting the temptation to “early-up” a building by applying false historical details or giving it a character it never had. In cleaning historic masonry, the goal should be to find an effective cleaning method that uses the least amount of water, detergent, or chemicals that will get the job done. The standards also, however, recognize that buildings need modern plumbing, heating, wiring, and air conditioning. Such work is entirely acceptable, though it should be done in a way that is unobtrusive and does not cause loss of important historic building materials.