

1.2 Using the Design Guidelines

General document format

The Design Guidelines are written to pertain to residential historic buildings of all sizes, materials, occupancy, and construction types; and apply to exterior renovations and repair 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 the "Recommended" column on the left; those approaches, treatments, and techniques which could adversely affect a building's historic character are listed in the "Not Recommended" column on the right.

"Recommended" courses of action in each section are listed in order of historic preservation importance, starting with preservation of a building's "character-defining" architectural materials and features. Rehabilitation guidance in each section begins with protection and maintenance. 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.

Applicability to specific buildings or situations

The Design Guidelines are intended to assist in applying the Secretary of the Interior Standards to projects generally; consequently, they are not meant to give case-specific advice or address exceptions or rare instances.

For example, the Guidelines cannot tell an owner or developer which features of their own historic building are important in defining the historic character, nor which features are non-contributing to the historic character and could readily be altered without having a negative affect. These determinations are made on a case-by-case basis. Similarly, assessing the condition of historic building materials is often not possible with photographic evidence or inspection.

Property owners are encouraged to consult with the Historic Preservation Commission in the planning stage of a project. Assistance is also available from historic preservation professionals, including architects, architectural historians, historians, archeologists, and contractors who are skilled in the preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of historic properties.

Recommended Process for Evaluating and Planning a Rehabilitation Project

Step #1. *Identify, Retain, and Preserve* features that define Historic Character

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 most important in *defining the historic character* – is always listed first in the “Recommended” column. The parallel “Not Recommended” column lists types of actions that are most apt to cause diminution or even loss of the building’s historic character. It should be remembered however, that such loss of character is just as often caused by the cumulative effect a series of actions that would seem to be minor interventions. Thus, the guidance in all of the “Not Recommended” columns must be viewed in that larger context, eg., for the total impact on historic building.

Step #2. *Protect And Maintain* character-defining features

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. 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, and other protective measures.

Step #3. *Repair* features where possible

Next, when the physical condition of character-defining materials and features warrants additional work, repairing is recommended. Guidance for 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.

Step #4. *Replace* features where necessary with like-in-kind materials

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 entire staircase; or a complete porch or storefront). If 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 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 features that – although damaged or deteriorated – could be reasonably be repaired and thus preserved.

General Policies for Common Situations

- **Historic architectural features are missing**

When an entire feature is missing (for example, an entrance, or cast iron façade; 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 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.

- **A significant addition or alteration is necessary**

Some exterior and interior alterations to the historic building are generally needed to assure a building's 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. 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. The construction of an exterior addition to a historic building should be considered after it is determined that the need for the addition cannot be met by altering secondary, non character-defining interior spaces. Exterior additions should be designed and constructed to be clearly differentiated from the historic building and so that character-defining features are not radically changed, obscured, damaged, or destroyed.

- **Need to update for health and safety codes or retrofit for better energy performance**

Section 3 addresses work done to meet health and safety code requirements (for example, providing barrier free access to historic buildings); or retrofitting measures to conserve energy (for example, installing solar collectors in an unobtrusive location on the site). Although this work is quite often an unimportant aspect of rehabilitation projects, it is usually not 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.

- **Pre-existing, non-original conditions exist (i.e. synthetic siding, enclosed front porch)**

Many non-historic and non-original features of buildings and their sites exist within the city's historic districts. Substitute siding materials, enclosed or altered porch design, decreased window size, and chain link fence are some of the most common and visible of these alterations. Those alterations of the historic structures which occurred before the area's designation as a historic district are considered to be pre-existing, non-original conditions and may continue in place throughout the useful life of the material. Generally, if a localized portion of a non original material is damaged through fire, auto collision, vandalism, etc., that portion of the non original material may be repaired or replaced with a similar material. However, if more than 50% of the non original material fails due to neglect, lack of maintenance, wear and tear, or exceeding its useful life, or in the event an owner proposes to replace more than 50% of a non-original material, then the repair or replacement shall be considered within the context of the design guidelines as they apply to other structures within the historic districts. Repairs or replacements of non-original materials shall not be artificially or arbitrarily divided so as to avoid the requirements in this paragraph.