
Secretary of the Interior's Standards

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties Although the name may sound a bit intimidating and bureaucratic, The Secretary of Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties formulated by the National Park Service, have long been used by most preservation organizations, including the State Historic Preservation Office and State Local Historic Districts, as the standard guidelines for restoring, rehabilitating and preserving our state's architecturally and historically significant sites. These standards, which promote responsible preservation practices, articulate the four different types of approaches to the treatment of historic buildings: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction. Briefly, the Secretary's Standards give these suggestions:

1. Make every effort to use the building for its original purpose.
2. Do not destroy distinctive original features.
3. Recognize all buildings as products of their own time.
4. Recognize and respect changes that have taken place over time.
5. Treat sensitively distinctive stylistic features or example of skilled craftwork.
6. Repair rather than replace worn architectural features when possible. When replacement is necessary, new material should match the old in design, composition, and color.
7. Clean facades using the gentlest methods possible. Avoid sandblasting and other damaging methods.
8. Protect and preserve affected archeological resources.
9. Compatible contemporary alterations are acceptable if they do not destroy significant historical or architectural fabric.
10. Build new additions so they can be removed without impairing the underlying structure.

Four Approaches PRESERVATION: This treatment places a high premium on the retention of all historic fabric through conservation, maintenance and repair. It reflects a property's continuum over time, and the respectful changes and alterations that are made through successive occupancies. Owners would use this approach if they wanted to stabilize and preserve a historic building to keep it the way it looks now. See related links below for further information of this specific approach.

REHABILITATION: This treatment also reflects a property's continuum over time. While emphasizing the retention and repair of historic materials, more latitude is provided for their replacement because it is assumed the property is more deteriorated prior to the work. Alterations and additions for an updated use are acceptable. An owner would use this approach if they wanted to update a building for a continuing or new use through repair, alterations, and additions. See related links below for further information of this specific approach.

RESTORATION: This treatment focuses on the retention of materials from the most significant time in a property's history. It permits the removal of materials from all other periods. This treatment is generally selected for interpretive purposes, by museums for example. An owner would use this approach if they wanted to backdate the building to an earlier period by removing later features. See related links below for further information of this specific approach.

RECONSTRUCTION: This treatment establishes limited opportunities to re-create a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object in all new material for interpretive purposes. A property owner would use this approach if they were to reconstruct a building that has vanished. See related links below for further information of this specific approach. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings are common sense principles in non-technical language. The four approaches were developed to help protect our irreplaceable cultural resources by promoting consistent preservation practices. The guidelines assist in applying the Standards to work on all historic building types and materials, the exterior and interior, as well as the building site and setting.