



Technical Preservation Services

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Using the Standards and Guidelines for Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, & Reconstruction

The purpose of The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings ([Part 1: Preservation and Rehabilitation \(PDF\)](#)

(<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/treatment-guidelines-2017-part1-preservation-rehabilitation.pdf>), [Part 2 - Reconstruction and Restoration \(PDF\)](#) (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/treatment-guidelines-2017-part2-reconstruction-restoration.pdf>) is to provide guidance to historic building owners and building managers, preservation consultants, architects, contractors, and project reviewers prior to beginning work. It is always recommended that preservation professionals be consulted early in any project.

The Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties address four treatments: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction. As stated in the regulations ([36 CFR Part 68](#)) (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-36/chapter-I/part-68?toc=1>) promulgating the Standards, "one set of standards ...will apply to a property undergoing treatment, depending upon the property's significance, existing physical condition, the extent of documentation available, and interpretive goals, when applicable. The Standards will be applied taking into consideration the economic and technical feasibility of each project." These Standards apply not only to historic buildings but also to a wide variety of historic resource types eligible to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This includes buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts.

Important Note about the Standards for Rehabilitation

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (36 CFR Part 68, 1995) consists of four treatment standards—**Preservation** (<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/treatment-standards-preservation.htm>), **Rehabilitation**

(<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/treatment-standards-rehabilitation.htm>), Restoration (<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/treatment-standards-restoration.htm>), and Reconstruction (<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/treatment-standards-reconstruction.htm>)—and are regulatory for NPS Grants-In-Aid programs. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/secretarys-standards-rehabilitation.htm>) (36 CFR Part 67, 1990), which are included in the Treatment Standards, are regulatory for the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program (<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/index.htm>) and are the criteria used to determine if a project qualifies as "a certified rehabilitation." The 1990 and the 1995 versions of the Rehabilitation Standards convey the same intent and provide the same guidance, although they are worded slightly differently, and "shall" replaces "will" in the 1995 version. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, in particular the Standards for Rehabilitation, are intended as general guidance for work on all historic properties, are widely used, and have been adopted at the Federal, State, and local levels.

The Guidelines are intended as an aid to assist in applying the Standards to all types of historic buildings. They are not meant to give case-specific advice or address exceptions or unusual conditions. They address both exterior and interior work on historic buildings. There are four sections, each focusing on one of the four treatment Standards: Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction. Each section includes one set of Standards with accompanying Guidelines that are to be used throughout the course of a project.

Preservation (<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/treatment-standards-preservation.htm>) is defined as the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property. Work, including preliminary measures to protect and stabilize the property, generally focuses upon the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials and features rather than extensive replacement and new construction. The limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a preservation project. However, new exterior additions are not within the scope of this treatment. The Standards for Preservation require retention of the greatest amount of historic fabric along with the building's historic form.

Rehabilitation (<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/treatment-standards-rehabilitation.htm>) is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values. The Rehabilitation Standards acknowledge the need to alter or add to a historic building to meet continuing or new uses while retaining the building's historic character.

Restoration (<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/treatment-standards-restoration.htm>) is defined as the act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period. The limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a restoration project. The Restoration Standards allow for the depiction of a building at a particular time in its history by preserving materials, features, finishes, and spaces from its period of significance and removing those from other periods.

Reconstruction (<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/treatment-standards-reconstruction.htm>) is defined as the act or process of depicting, by means of new construction, the form, features, and detailing of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location. The Reconstruction Standards establish a limited framework for recreating a vanished or non-surviving building with new materials, primarily for interpretive purposes.

The Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, codified in 36 CFR 68 (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-36/chapter-I/part-68?toc=1>), are regulatory for all grant-in-aid projects assisted through the national Historic Preservation Fund.

The Standards for Rehabilitation (<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/secretarys-standards-rehabilitation.htm>), codified in 36 CFR 67 (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-36/chapter-I/part-67?toc=1>), are regulatory for the review of rehabilitation work in the Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program (<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/index.htm>).

The Guidelines are advisory, not regulatory.

Choosing an Appropriate Treatment for the Historic Property

The Guidelines are intended to promote responsible preservation practices that help protect the nation's irreplaceable cultural resources. For example, they cannot, in and of themselves, be used to make essential decisions about which features of the historic building should be saved and which can be changed. But, once a treatment is selected, the Standards and Guidelines provide a consistent philosophical approach to the work.

Choosing the most appropriate treatment for a building requires careful decision making about a building's historical significance, as well as taking into account a number of other considerations:

- **Level of Significance.** National Historic Landmarks, designated for their "exceptional significance in American history," and other properties important for their interpretive value may be candidates for Preservation or Restoration. Rehabilitation, however, is the most commonly used treatment for the majority of historic buildings. Reconstruction has the most limited application because so few resources that are no longer extant can be documented to the degree necessary to accurately recreate the property in a manner that conveys its appearance at a particular point in history.
- **Physical condition.** Preservation may be appropriate if distinctive materials, features, and spaces are essentially intact and convey the building's historical significance. If the building requires more extensive repair and replacement, or if alterations or a new addition are necessary for a new use, then Rehabilitation is probably the most appropriate treatment.
- **Proposed use.** Many historic buildings can be adapted for a new use or updated for a continuing use without seriously impacting their historic character. However, it may be very difficult or impossible to convert some special-use properties for new uses without major alterations, resulting in loss of historic character and even integrity.
- **Code and other regulations.** Regardless of the treatment, regulatory requirements must be addressed. But without a sensitive design approach such work may damage a building's historic materials and negatively impact its character. Therefore, because the ultimate use of the building determines what requirements will have to be met, some potential uses of a historic building may not be appropriate if the necessary modifications would not preserve the building's historic character. This includes adaptations to address natural hazards as well as sustainability.

History of the Standards

Read a [History of The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings.](https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/treatment-standards-history.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/treatment-standards-history.htm>)

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