
APPENDIX 3. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR THE TREATMENT OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

The philosophy that guides the implementation of recommendations included in this Historic Preservation Plan is based on a set of guidelines entitled The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, commonly called the "Secretary of the Interior's Standards" or simply the "Standards."

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards were created by historic preservation professionals to provide guidance in the appropriate treatment of historic resources. The Standards were first established by the federal government in 1966 to provide guidelines for the appropriate treatment of buildings and resources impacted by federal projects. Because of their usefulness, they have been adopted throughout the field of historic preservation.

All federally funded and permitted activities affecting historic resources are evaluated with respect to these standards, including the use of rehabilitation tax credits. The Standards were developed specifically to prevent unintended damage to or loss of historic resources by federal actions, such as those that occurred as the result of the wholesale demolition of historic neighborhoods through urban renewal.

An individual set of standards was developed for each of the four preservation treatments explained in Appendix E. Just as the treatment of Rehabilitation is appropriate for most projects, the Standards for Rehabilitation are applicable to most projects being undertaken for historic buildings and landscapes in Erie.

In the language of community planners, The Secretary of the Interior's Standards are a list of "best practices" for historic preservation. They are a touchstone for all activities affecting historic buildings and landscapes and help ensure that important issues about the care of historic buildings and landscapes are not forgotten in the process of making decisions about other issues.

When the Standards are used in the context of a new construction project involving an historic building, they provide a starting point for the discussion of proposed changes to the building's historic character and fabric. They were developed to ensure that policies toward historic resources were applied uniformly, even if the end result may be different in every case. All preservation activities, whether publicly or privately funded, can be informed by understanding the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

Because the Standards outline a sensitive approach for assessing changes to historic properties, they are often included in design guidelines, preservation plans, ordinances, and regulations that govern activities affecting local historic districts.

These Standards articulate basic principles that are fundamental to historic preservation. Although they have been modified over the years to accommodate changing views of historical significance and treatment options, their basic message has remained the same. The durability of the Standards is testimony not only to their soundness, but also to

the flexibility of their language. They provide a philosophy and approach to problem solving for those involved in managing the treatment of historic buildings, rather than a set of solutions to specific design issues.

Following a balanced, reasonable, and disciplined process is often more important than the exact nature of the treatment option that is chosen. Instead of predetermining an outcome in favor of retaining or recreating historic features, the Standards help ensure that the critical issues are considered.

For federal projects and federal agencies, the language of The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties is codified in 36 CFR Part 68 (the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 36, Parks, Forests and Public Property, Chapter 1 National Park Service, Department of the Interior, Part 68). A related federal regulation, 36 CFR Part 67, addresses the use of the Standards in the certification of projects receiving federal rehabilitation tax credits. The Standards are published by the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, and are available online, including definitions for the four preservation treatments discussed above (National Park Service 2015).

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are particularly useful in consideration of the appropriate maintenance of historic buildings; the alteration of older buildings as necessary for reuse, safety, and accessibility; and the construction of new buildings in an historic context. The ten standards that comprise the Standards for Rehabilitation are quoted below followed by a brief discussion of the implications of each.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

STANDARD 1 – A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships. Standard 1 recommends compatible use in the context of adaptive reuse and changes to historic buildings and landscapes. This standard encourages property owners to find uses that retain and enhance historic character, not detract from it. The work involved in reuse projects should be carefully planned to minimize impacts on historic features, materials, and spaces. The destruction of character-defining features should be avoided.

STANDARD 2 –The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided. Standard 2 recommends the retention and preservation of character-defining features. It emphasizes the importance of preserving integrity and as much existing historic fabric as possible. Alterations that repair or modify existing historic fabric are preferable to those that require total removal.

STANDARD 3 – Each property will 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 elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.

Standard 3 focuses on authenticity and discourages the conjectural restoration of an entire property, feature, or design. It also discourages combining and/or grafting historic features and elements from different properties, and constructing new buildings that appear to be historic. Literal restoration to an historic appearance should only be undertaken when detailed documentation is available and when the significance of the resource warrants restoration. Reconstruction of lost features should not be attempted without adequate documentation.

STANDARD 4 – Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved. Standard 4 recognizes that buildings change, and that many of these changes contribute to a building's historical significance. Understanding a building's history and development is just as important as understanding its original design, appearance, and function. This point should be kept in mind when considering treatments for buildings that have undergone many changes. Most historic buildings contain a visual record of their own evolution. This evolution can be identified, and changes that are significant to the history of the building should be retained. The opportunity to compare multiple periods of time in the same building lends interest to the structure and helps communicate changes that have occurred within the larger landscape and community context.

STANDARD 5 – Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved. Standard 5 recommends preserving the distinctive historic components of a building or landscape that represent its historic character. Workmanship, materials, methods of construction, floor plans, and both ornate and typical details should be identified prior to undertaking work.

STANDARD 6 – Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence. Standard 6 encourages property owners to repair historic character-defining features instead of replacing them when historic features are deteriorated or even missing. In cases where deterioration makes replacement necessary, new features should closely match historic conditions in all respects. Before any features are altered or removed, property owners are urged to document existing conditions with photography and notes. These records assist future choices that are appropriate to the property's historic character.

STANDARD 7 – Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used. Standard 7 warns against using chemical and physical treatments that can permanently damage historic features. Many commercially available treatments are irreversibly damaging. Sandblasting and harsh chemical cleaning, in particular, are extremely harmful to wood and masonry surfaces because they destroy the material's basic physical properties and speed deterioration.

STANDARD 8 – Archaeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken. Standard 8 addresses the importance of below-ground prehistoric and historic features. This issue is of most importance when a construction project involves excavation. An assessment of a site’s archaeological potential prior to work is recommended. If archaeological resources are present, some type of mitigation should be considered. Solutions should be developed that minimize the need for excavation of previously unexcavated sites.

STANDARD 9 – New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

STANDARD 10 – New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in a such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired. Standards 9 and 10 are linked by issues of the compatibility and reversibility of additions, alterations, and new construction. Both standards are intended to 1) minimize the damage to historic fabric caused by building additions, and 2) ensure that new work will be different from, but compatible with, existing historic conditions. Following these standards will help to protect a building’s historic integrity.

In conclusion, the basis for the Standards is the premise that historic resources are more than objects of aesthetic merit; they are repositories of historical information. It is important to reiterate that the Standards provide a framework for evaluating preservation activities and emphasize preservation of historic fabric, honesty of historical expression, and reversibility. All decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis. The level of craftsmanship, detailing, and quality of materials should be appropriate to the significance of the resource.

For more information, please see <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/secretary-standards-treatment-historic-properties.htm>.