

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA MUNICIPAL REGULATIONS  
TITLE 10A HISTORIC PRESERVATION

**CHAPTER 20 DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES**

Secs.	
2000	General Provisions
2001	Purpose and Use
2002	Compatibility and Consistency with the Purposes of the Historic Protection Act
2003	Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation
2004	Historic Preservation Guidelines

**2000 GENERAL PROVISIONS**

The Board shall establish standards and guidelines to assist it and the staff in making determinations whether proposed work is compatible with the character of historic properties. The standards and guidelines shall enunciate the Board's policy with respect to various types of work, and shall indicate what types of work are considered to constitute appropriate treatments or adaptations of historic properties.

Work undertaken in conformity with the Board's standards and guidelines shall be considered consistent with the purposes of the Historic Protection Act.

Standards and guidelines shall be developed through a process that provides an opportunity for public review and comment. Any standards shall be promulgated as part of these regulations.

In addition to its own specific standards and guidelines, the Board shall apply commonly accepted standards of historic preservation practice.

The following terms specifically applicable to this chapter are defined in Chapter 99:

- (a) Standards or Board's standards;
- (b) Guidelines or Board's guidelines;
- (c) Adapt and adaptation;
- (d) Compatible;
- (e) Incompatible;
- (f) Rehabilitation; and
- (g) Restoration.

**2001 PURPOSE AND USE**

The Board's design and construction standards are intended to promote the clear understanding and use of responsible historic preservation methods and practices. They are not intended as rigid and unyielding rules for all situations, but rather as a general means of promoting equity of treatment among applicants and consistency to the directions given by the Board and staff.

The Board's standards shall be used with discretion, considering the context in which they are applied. Their application shall involve a careful assessment of the characteristics of affected historic properties, the nature of the proposed project, and other practical considerations.

- (a) Pertinent considerations about the historic property include its relative importance, nature of significance, condition, and degree of material integrity.
- (b) Pertinent conditions about the project include the extent of its impact, its degree of reversibility, allowable development rights, and related practical or regulatory constraints.
- (c) Pertinent considerations about the relationship of a project to a historic district include its compatibility with its immediate context and not merely its consistency with conditions found elsewhere in the historic district.

The burden shall be on an applicant to show that an exception to the normal rule in the Board's standards is appropriate.

## **2002 COMPATIBILITY AND CONSISTENCY WITH THE PURPOSES OF THE HISTORIC PROTECTION ACT**

The Board shall review an application for demolition, alteration, or subdivision to advise the Mayor's Agent whether the work is compatible with the purposes of the Historic Protection Act.

The Mayor's Agent may approve an application as necessary in the public interest because it is consistent with the purposes of the Act.

The purposes of the Act are, with respect to historic landmarks:

- (a) To retain and enhance historic landmarks and to encourage their adaptation for current use; and
- (b) To encourage the restoration of historic landmarks.

The purposes of the Historic Protection Act are, with respect to historic districts:

- (a) To retain and enhance those properties which contribute to the character of the historic district and to encourage their adaptation for current use;

- (b) To assure that alterations of existing structures are compatible with the character of the historic district; and
- (c) To assure that new construction and subdivision of lots in an historic district are compatible with the character of the historic district.

## **2003 SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION**

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are the most commonly accepted national standards of good preservation practice. They are used by all federal agencies and SHPOs, and have been adopted by historic district and planning commissions across the country.

The Board, the SHPO, and the staff apply the Secretary's Standards in all project reviews under the federal preservation program, including Section 106 cases and projects seeking certified rehabilitation status for federal tax purposes.

The Board and the staff may also apply the Secretary's Standards in the review of projects under the Historic Protection Act. Rehabilitation that meets the Secretary's Standards shall be considered compatible with the character of a historic landmark or historic district. Although conformity is encouraged, rehabilitation is not required to meet the Secretary's Standards to be considered compatible or consistent with the purposes of the Act.

The Secretary's Standards are:

- (a) *Standard 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.
- (b) *Standard 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.
- (c) *Standard 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.
- (d) *Standard 4:* Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
- (e) *Standard 5:* Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
- (f) *Standard 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.

- (g) *Standard 7:* Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic material shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
- (h) *Standard 8:* Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
- (i) *Standard 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.
- (j) *Standard 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.

The Secretary's Standards are accompanied by Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, which are intended to assist in applying the Standards to projects generally. The Standards and Guidelines are published by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, and are available from the U.S. Government Printing Office. The HPO shall also make copies available for review by the public at the HPO office.

## **2004 HISTORIC PRESERVATION GUIDELINES**

To promote the clarity and understanding of design and construction standards, the Board and HPO may prepare design guidelines for use in conjunction with the standards. The Board's design guidelines shall augment the standards and provide examples of treatments that are recommended or not recommended.

Before the implementation of any design guidelines, the HPO shall submit the proposed guidelines to the Board for its review and acceptance. The Board shall adopt design guidelines only after distribution of the proposed guidelines to the public for review and comment, and a duly noticed public hearing at which the public may participate.

The HPO may make minor changes to adopted guidelines without a public hearing by the Board.