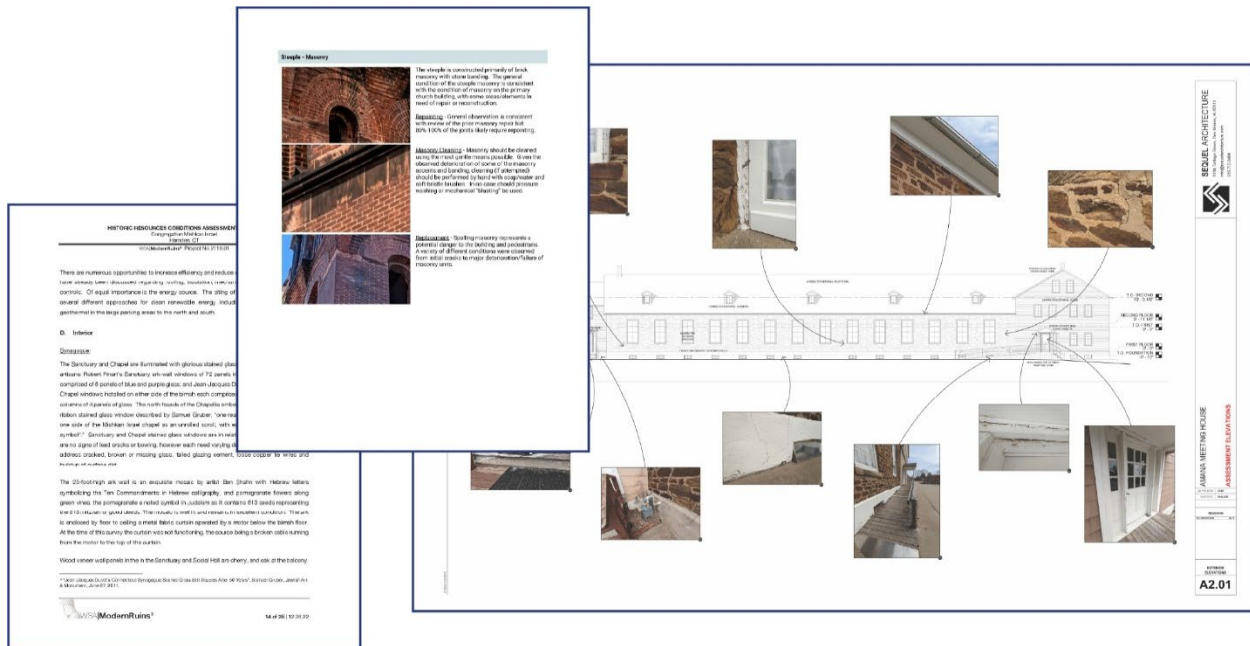


BUILDING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT



Why is my building leaking? Do I need to replace the roof?

Why are there pieces of mortar on the ground? Do I need to do something to repair the exterior brick?

Why is the plaster in my building cracking? Should I repair it, or is there something else I should do first?

Congregations often have many questions about how to best maintain their historic sacred place. They may also notice that there are issues that need to be repaired, but they are unsure of where to begin. A good starting point is a Building Conditions Assessment. The National Fund for Sacred Places (National Fund) does not require a Building Conditions Assessment (BCA), but we highly recommend that congregations complete this important comprehensive report.

WHAT IS A BUILDING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT?

A Building Conditions Assessment is a report that records the existing conditions of a building, identifies issues with the building, and provides a list of prioritized recommendations. In other words, it identifies what work needs to be done to the building and in what order that work should be completed.

The Building Conditions Assessment is the first step of the planning process for a capital construction project and should be completed before starting the design process (schematic design, design development, or construction documents). The assessment can be completed as part of the pre-design phase of a capital construction project or completed separately from the capital construction project.

National Fund participants have an opportunity to apply for a Planning Grant that can be used to help cover some of the cost of preparing a new Building Conditions Assessment or updating an older report.

These types of assessments can go by different names, including condition assessments, condition surveys, assessment reports, historic structure reports, etc., but they are not building inspections or facility assessments. Building inspections and facility assessments have different goals than Building Conditions Assessments, so they provide different information. If you have questions about your assessment report or whether it is considered a Building Conditions Assessment, please ask your National Fund Point Person.

After you have the prioritized recommendations included in the Building Conditions Assessment, you can develop your scope of work for a capital construction project based on your budget. You should start with the items that have been identified as immediate recommendations or high-priority issues and then move to items that are of a lower priority. It is important to keep in mind that the National Fund prioritizes funding urgent repair needs related to structural components, walls, roof, and/or other elements of the building envelope that are integral to a building's preservation and longevity. Projects that improve functionality or improve accessibility of the property in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are also eligible, as well as renovation projects that make vacant or underused space usable for community outreach, but program participants should demonstrate that urgent repair needs to the building envelope have already been identified by a building conditions assessment and addressed before proposing ADA or interior rehabilitation projects.

WHY IS A BUILDING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT IMPORTANT?

A Building Conditions Assessment is a critical diagnostic tool. It looks at the building holistically and diagnoses the origins of any pre-existing issues. It helps you understand the needs of your building and helps you make informed decisions, especially if there are urgent needs. For example, if there is a leak in your sanctuary, you might assume that the roof needs to be replaced – but the water could be coming from a leaking pipe, a condensing unit on the roof, or through the exterior wall. A Building Conditions Assessment will identify the issue, determine its cause, and outline the necessary repairs. This will save your congregation from completing projects that will not resolve the ongoing issue.

A Building Conditions Assessment can also help you explore your options before entering the design phases and weigh the pros and cons of your different options. For example, if the Building Conditions Assessment determines that your boiler is past its typical life expectancy, it can also explore options for its replacement (ducted system, ductless system, geothermal, split system, zone HVAC system, heat pumps, etc.), which system will meet your needs, and what impact the different systems will have on the building.

A Building Conditions Assessment will also help you develop a long-term plan for the care and maintenance of your building. In addition to identifying urgent repair items, the Building Conditions Assessment also identifies items that should be repaired within the next 5 to 10 years. This will help you plan for the long-term stewardship of your building. It will help you think proactively about the building and repair items before a major issue arises, rather than scrambling to address unexpected problems as they happen.

WHO LEADS A BUILDING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT, AND WHO ELSE IS INVOLVED?

Building Conditions Assessments can be led by an architect, engineer, or other specialist, but most are led by an architect. The architect will bring together a team of other design professionals and specialists to complete the Building Conditions Assessment. The size of the team can vary depending on the building and the objectives of the assessment. A team for a Building Conditions Assessment typically includes architects, structural engineers, mechanical and plumbing engineers, and electrical engineers. The team could also include historians, building code consultants, fire protection engineers, paint conservators, stained glass conservators, and many other specialty tradespeople.

WHAT IS INCLUDED?

A Building Conditions Assessment should include a thorough description of the existing conditions of your building, accompanied by detailed photographs that illustrate those conditions, a prioritized list of recommended actions, and a cost estimate for the recommended repairs. Building Conditions Assessments can also include executive summaries, histories of the buildings, building code assessments, accessibility assessments, historic photographs, descriptions of building materials, as-built or existing condition drawings, and drawings that highlight areas requiring repair.

The format of the final Building Conditions Assessment varies, and there is no single rule on what they should look like. Most are written reports that are formatted to be printed on 8-1/2" x 11" (letter size) paper. Some Building Conditions Assessments are larger format that are to be printed on 11" x 17" (ledger size) paper or 24" x 36" paper. Other Building Conditions Assessments are a combination of several different formats.

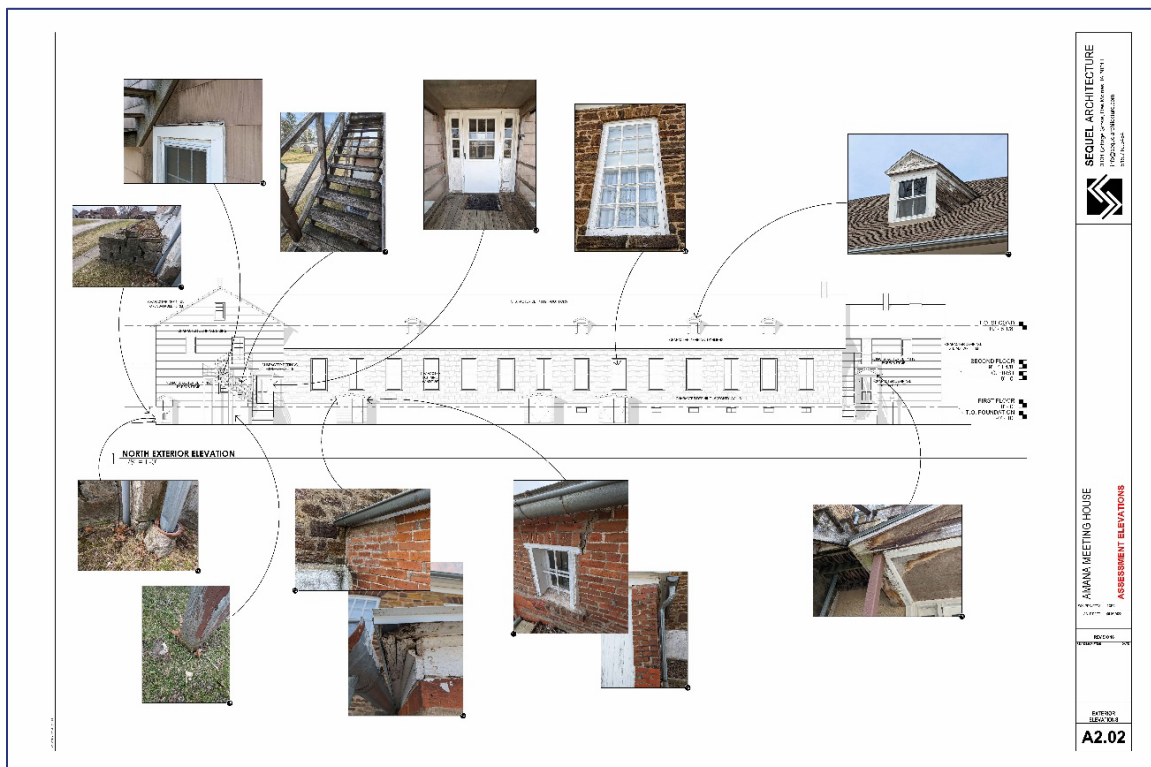
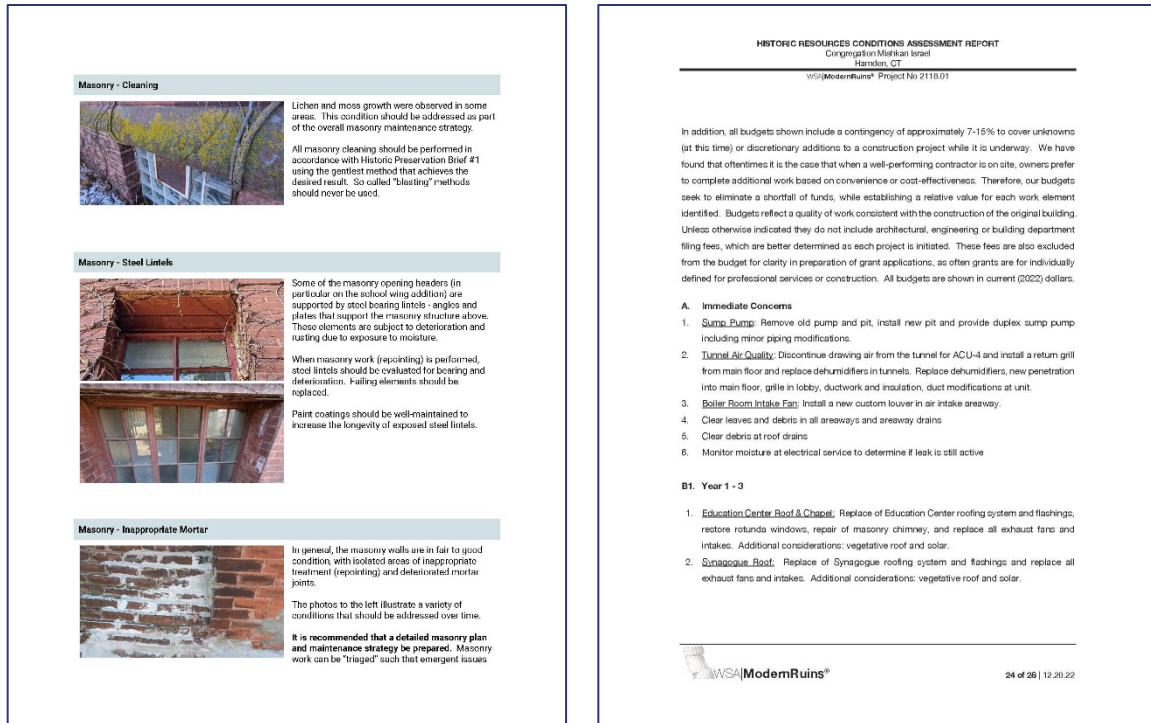
Building Conditions Assessment for historic buildings, including historic sacred places, should be based on historic preservation methods and techniques. The best practice is to have the prioritized treatment recommendations meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are widely accepted as the basis for how historic buildings should be rehabilitated and are regularly used at the federal, state, and local levels to guide and evaluate the appropriateness of repairs, alterations, and construction work. All projects supported by the National Fund are required to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The Standards allow buildings to be changed to meet contemporary needs, while ensuring that those features that make buildings historically and architecturally distinctive are preserved.

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines
www.nps.gov/articles/000/treatment-standards-rehabilitation.htm

National Park Service Preservation Briefs
www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/preservation-briefs.htm



Examples of Building Conditions Assessment. Top Left: Calvary Baptist Church Building Conditions Assessment by Sequel Architecture. Top Right: Congregation Mishkan Israel Historic Resources Conditions Assessment by WSA | Modern Ruins. Bottom: Amana Church Society Assessment Elevations by Sequel Architecture.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR CREATING A BUILDING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT?

FIND AN EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONAL

There are a variety of methods you can use to find someone to complete a Building Conditions Assessment. The most common can be found in the article in this binder titled “How to Hire an Architect.”

It is recommended to find professionals (architects, engineers, and contractors) who have experience working on historic buildings. You can learn this from a firm’s website by reviewing the services they provide, their previous experience, their mission or design philosophy, and awards.

In addition to researching architecture firms, you can get recommendations by reaching out to the following groups and organizations. If you need help identifying the organizations you should contact, reach out to your National Fund Point Person.

- Congregations with historic sacred places in your geographic area or within your denomination that have recently gone through a capital construction project
- Your local historic preservation non-profit, if applicable
- Your statewide historic preservation non-profit
- Your city’s historic preservation office or commission
- Your State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) or Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO)
- Your local American Institute of Architects chapter
- National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA)
- Association for Preservation Technology (APT)

It is also important to find professionals who do Building Conditions Assessments. Not every architect provides comprehensive assessments as part of their services. You can learn if this is a service they provide through their website or by reaching out to the individual firms.

INVESTIGATION

After the team has been hired to complete the Building Conditions Assessment, they will complete an on-site investigation. The investigation can range from a simple one-day walk-through to a series of investigations over several months. The investigation can include both non-destructive and destructive testing. Non-destructive testing is the most common. With this type of investigation, the surface of the materials on the exterior and interior of the building is observed, and their conditions are noted. No materials are removed to assess their condition below the surface, so the condition of the building will remain the same as it was before the investigation. Professionals can utilize specialized equipment to gain a better understanding of concealed elements or materials, such as X-rays, borescopes, mirrors, ultraviolet or infrared lights, and/or ground-penetrating radar. Small material samples, such as wood, plaster, mortar, or paint, can also be taken to be sent to a lab for testing.

In some instances, the non-destructive testing may not provide the information needed to understand what is causing an issue, so small “windows” can be opened in the surface of the building to see the sub-

surfaces. This destructive testing does require the removal of some materials to allow for a full understanding of an issue. Destructive testing should only be carried out by a professional after non-destructive testing has failed to produce the necessary information. This type of testing will require repair of the materials that were removed once testing is complete.

The team conducting the investigation will use a variety of equipment during the assessment. They will typically use pens or pencils, paper, cameras, tape measures, laser distance meters, and/or a pick or poker. They might ask you to provide a ladder or clear access throughout the building to ensure they can see everything. Depending upon the building's height and the goals of the assessment, the team may rent a lift or hire someone with a drone to inspect elements of the building that are not visible from the ground.

As part of the investigation, the team might want to talk to people who help maintain the building to understand any current issues or obtain documentation of previous repairs. This will help the team understand which areas they may need to investigate further and provide a better understanding of the building's condition.

COMPILING THE INFORMATION

After the investigation is complete and the team of professionals working on the Building Conditions Assessment has all the information they need, the team will work together to develop prioritized recommendations and cost estimates. The information from the investigation, the prioritized recommendations, cost estimates, and any additional information gathered for the Building Conditions Assessment is then compiled into the final format.

MEETING TO REVIEW THE INFORMATION

It is often helpful to meet with the team that completed the Building Conditions Assessment so they can walk you through the report, helping you understand the format and highlighting the areas that require urgent repair.

UPDATING THE BUILDING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

The condition of the building is constantly changing. An issue that was previously considered a low priority can become an urgent issue over time. It is best practice to update your Building Conditions Assessment every 5 years to make sure you know how to best maintain your building.

