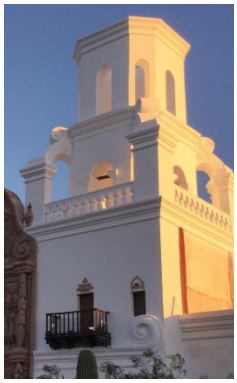
NATIONAL FUND FOR SACRED PLACES

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE | SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION





Left: View of the tower after construction at Mission San Xavier del Bac, Tucson, AZ. Photo by Miles Green.
Center: View of the southeast corner of the building after construction of Amana Church, Middle Amana, IA. Photo by Peter Hoehnlne.
Right: Close up image of the restored and painted metal and roof of the tower at Calvary Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN. Photo by Jackie Adelmann Photography.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR THE TREATMENT OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

On October 15, 1966, the National Historic Preservation Act was signed into law, establishing a national historic preservation program. It charged the National Park Service (delegated by the Secretary of the Interior) with establishing and managing the program and developing professional standards and guidelines for preserving historic properties. The first set of Standards (The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation Projects) was issued in 1978 and published with Guidelines for Applying the Standards in 1979. These Standards and Guidelines were reprinted in 1985. In 1992, the Standards were revised and retitled The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. They were codified as 36 CFR Part 68 in the July 12, 1995, Federal Register (Vol. 60, No. 113). In the same year, the National Park Service published its accompanying guidelines, The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings. The Guidelines have been updated several times, most recently in 2017.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties provide the framework to guide the process of adopting a treatment approach. The adoption of a treatment approach is necessary for the proper management, repair, and renovation of a historic building. The Standards define four different treatment options – Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction:

PRESERVATION is the act or process of sustaining the existing form, features, and materials of an historic property through the conservation, maintenance, and repair of the historic materials. It preserves the physical record of the property over time, place, and use.

REHABILITATION is the act or process of making the property usable for a compatible new use but still retaining the historic forms, features, and materials that give the building character. With this treatment option, there is more latitude for modification than with preservation.

RESTORATION is the act or process of returning a property's forms, features, and characteristics to a particular period in its history by means of the removal of features from other periods and the reconstruction of missing features.

RECONSTRUCTION is the act or process of recreating a form, feature, or detail of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object to replicate a specific period of time by means of new construction.

All projects funded by the National Fund for Sacred Places must adhere to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. These Standards are widely accepted as the basis for how to rehabilitate a historic building. They are consistently used at the federal, state, and local levels to guide and evaluate the appropriateness of repairs, alterations, and construction work. These Standards allow buildings to be altered to meet contemporary needs while ensuring that features that make buildings historically and architecturally distinctive are preserved.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

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.
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.
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.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
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.
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.

8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

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 will 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.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will 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.

KEY PRINCIPLES

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation can be broken down into a few basic key principles. The key principles for the rehabilitation of historic buildings are provided below, but each historic material, feature, finish, and space has specific treatment recommendations that should be followed. Reference the resources in the section below and the additional Quick Reference Guides for more specific recommendations.

- **RETAIN AND PRESERVE:** The historic character of a property should be retained and preserved, including historic materials, features, finishes, spaces, and spatial relationships.
- **REPAIR:** Deteriorated historic materials should be repaired rather than replaced.
- **REPLACE IN-KIND:** If the historic material is severely deteriorated or damaged and cannot be repaired, it should be replaced in-kind (matching the existing in design, size, texture, and, where possible, material).
- **GENTLEST METHOD:** The gentlest method should always be used. Treatment that causes damage to historic materials should not be used.
- **COMPATIBLE:** New work should be compatible with the historic but be able to be differentiated.
- **REMOVABLE:** New construction should be removable without damaging the historic materials.

RESOURCES

Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings

Preservation Briefs

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards Explained by Cassie Keener, National Trust for Historic Preservation

10 Basic Principles for Rehabbing the Right Way by Julia Rocchi, National Trust for Historic Preservation