

HISTORIC PRESERVATION TAX CREDIT PROGRAM

GUIDANCE FOR CARRYING OUT PROJECT WORK THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

All project reviews carried out under the State of Delaware Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program (Program) are reviewed and evaluated in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* (<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/secretarys-standards-rehabilitation.htm>) (*Standards and Guidelines*). The *Standards and Guidelines* are broadly worded so as to be able to guide in the rehabilitation of all historic structures, whether they are industrial complexes, warehouses, schools, commercial structures, or residences. The underlying concern expressed in the *Standards and Guidelines* is the preservation of significant historic materials and features of a building in the process of rehabilitation. Rehabilitation 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. Many historic buildings have been altered in the past and sometimes these alterations gain significance in their own right. The form and detailing of those architectural materials and features that are important in defining the historic character of a building are to be identified, retained, and preserved. Those materials and features identified as character-defining should be protected and maintained. When additional work is necessary, repairing the features is recommended. Repairs may include patching, piecing-in, splicing, consolidating, and limited replacement in-kind. If the level of damage and deterioration is so extensive that it precludes repair, then replacement of an entire character-defining feature with new material following physical or historical evidence is appropriate. Some alterations may be necessary, but it is important that such alterations do not radically change, obscure, or destroy character-defining materials, features, or finishes. Alterations should be carried out so that, if removed, the essential historic character and materials of the building are unaffected.

When undertaking projects to receive historic preservation tax credits, the *Standards and Guidelines* applied in reviewing both the interior and exterior work as well as any attached, adjacent or related new construction. The *Standards and Guidelines* are applied to rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility. Certification of the Rehabilitation is based on whether the overall project is consistent with the *Standards and Guidelines*. The recommended approach is to repair building components; however, if a component is deteriorated, replacement “in-kind,” using the same material in the same design, is always allowed. Denial of certification may result if replacement of original materials is excessive or unnecessary. Sound original materials are a part of the history of the building and should be left in place with only the deteriorated portions repaired or replaced.

DEFINITION OF TERMS:

- **Avoid** means that the applicant should not include this type of work in the project. As the work would generally not be considered consistent with the *Standards and Guidelines*, it would likely not be approved.
- **Protect** means that the applicant should avoid treatment that would damage features, materials, or finishes adjacent to those being rehabilitated. [Consult Preservation Brief 6: The Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-06-abrasive-cleaning.pdf>)]
- **Retain, reuse, or preserve** means that the applicant should preserve the existing historic materials and details. If they are in sound and usable condition. If they are not sound enough to retain, then document their condition in photographs.
- **Repair** means that the applicant should retain the historic material and use techniques such as patching or refinishing with compatible materials in order to bring the feature to a sound and usable condition.
- **Rehabilitate** means that the applicant should make repairs and/or alterations needed to provide for the proposed use in a way that does not damage or destroy historic building materials that define the historic character of the building. [Consult *Preservation Brief 17: Architectural Character: Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to defining their Character* (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-17-architectural-character.pdf>) and *Preservation Brief 18: Rehabilitating Historic Interiors: Identifying and Preserving Character-Defining Elements* (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-18-interiors.pdf>)]
- **Replacement** means that the replaced feature should match the existing in design, dimensions, and materials, based on physical or historical documentation. Sometimes substitute material is allowed with approval. [Consult Preservation Brief 16: The Use of Substitute Material on Historic Buildings (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-16-substitute-materials-2023.pdf>)]

GENERAL ISSUES:

- **Demolition (Exterior or Interior):** Specify condition and assess significance of each section proposed for demolition. For projects in which major demolition is proposed due to structural problems, a report from a structural engineer experienced in the examination of historic buildings will be required as justification for demolition.
- **Existing Outbuildings:** The rehabilitation of existing outbuildings, including garages, smokehouses, kitchens, barns, etc. may be rehabilitated under this Program if the outbuilding contributes to the historic significance of the property or district; however, moving of outbuildings is generally not allowed. Demolition of outbuildings which contribute to the significance of the property or district should be avoided as it may result in denial of certification.
- **Loss of Historic Fabric due to Fire, Vandalism, or Unsympathetic Rehabilitation by a Previous Owner:** "Fabric" refers to any construction material. If there is loss of historic fabric due to any of these conditions, then a site visit by the Tax Credit Manager prior to undertaking any rehabilitation work is advised. If existing condition are not verified by the Tax Credit Manager or a designee, denial of the certification may result.
- **Code Requirements:** Hastily or poorly designed, code-required work may jeopardize a historic building's materials as well as its historic character. Abatement of lead paint and asbestos within historic buildings requires particular care if important historic finishes are not to be adversely affected. Alterations and new construction needed to meet accessibility requirements should be designed to minimize material loss and visual change to a historic building. Issues related to stairs which do not meet fire codes should be discussed with the Tax Credit Manager.

EXTERIOR:

- **Changes to Building Exterior:** The extent to which an historic building's exterior appearance can be altered and still be considered to meet the Standards depends on the significance of the architectural features and the visibility of the area in which the proposed changes are to take place. The primary façade is generally the one that is visible from public rights-of-way and should be left as intact as possible. More latitude is given to changes made to secondary or rear facades, as long as they do not contain significant architectural features.
- **Decorative Features and Ornamentation:** Existing decorative trim should be retained and repaired. It is not required that missing trim be restored; however, if such work is planned, there should be good historical evidence to support the design for the replacement. If the rehabilitation result in masking the historic architectural trim in such a way that it obscures its historic character, denial of certification may result.
- **Doors:** Original doors are significant features of all historic properties. Applicants are strongly encouraged to retain and repair historic doors. Replacement doors should replicate the materials and design of the original door. Where replacement is proposed, the existing condition should be documented and the design of the replacement door specified in the application. For purposes of improving energy efficiency, the installation of exterior storm doors is recommended instead of replacing original doors. Storm doors may be metal or wood. Aluminum storm doors are acceptable as long as they contain full height glass, and the finish is painted or baked-on enamel. Specify design, finish and location.
- **Masonry Cleaning:** Every method of exterior cleaning carries with it some risk of damage to building materials. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration or to remove graffiti and severe staining. Indicate the condition of each material to be cleaned and specify what the cleaning is intended to accomplish (soot removal, paint removal, etc.) as well as the cleaning process to be used on each masonry element. Provide supporting material to show that method selected is the gentlest means possible for the project. Abrasive cleaning methods (such as sandblasting of soft brick) are prohibited. Even high-pressure water blasting can be damaging, even if no sand or other aggregate is added to the water. Test patches should always be required and the results of these as shown in close-up color photographs before and after cleaning must be provided as evidence that the method being proposed did not damage surface being cleaned. Applications must provide information on the type of cleaning products and methods, the strengths (percentage) of water pressure to

be used measured in pounds per square inch (psi), the amount of water to be used measured in gallons per minute (gpm), and the nozzle tip (measured in degrees) to be used. [Consult *Preservation Brief 1: Assessing Cleaning and Water-Repellant Treatment for Historic Masonry Buildings* (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-01-cleaning-masonry.pdf>)]

- **Masonry Re-pointing:** If done improperly, re-pointing can cause damage to an historic building's structure and visual appearance. It is important that the composition of the new mortar duplicate the original mortar of the existing building in strength, color, and detailing. The method used to remove deteriorated mortar is also an important consideration. Hand chiseling of deteriorated mortar joints is the method least likely to cause damage to brick or stone. Cutting the mortar out with masonry saws and removing it with power chisels can sometimes be performed without damaging the brick, but if these operations are performed carelessly, they can cause permanent damage to the masonry. The composition of the new mortar must be in keeping with the original mortar. Too often, especially in brick walls and chimneys, mortar joints are re-pointed with Portland cement compounds that are harder than the bricks themselves and consequently result in the face brick cracking or spalling (falling off). A reasonably soft mortar should contain at least as much hydrated lime as Portland cement, and preferably two or three times as much for pre-1875 buildings and those having a softer hand-made brick. The appearance of the new joints should match the original. The primary concerns with the visual appearance of the joints are the color and texture of the replacement mortar, the joint width, and the tooling. If the mix contains Portland cement, white Portland cement should be used rather than gray Portland cement. The aggregate or sand is used in the mortar mix to provide the appropriate color but, if needed to achieve a color match, a masonry pigment can be added. Mortar takes four weeks of curing time before the final color is reached. The new mortar joints should be slightly recessed from the face brick since bringing the mortar joint flush with the face brick will create a visually thicker mortar joint. Because of the potential damage that can result from any type of re-pointing, a test patch should be completed by the contractor to demonstrate competency in removing existing or original mortar. Re-pointing should be limited to those joints that are deteriorated. If done properly, the newly pointed work will match that of the rest of the building. Limited re-pointing is the most economical procedure as well as the best preservation practice. The Description of the Rehabilitation should indicate deteriorated areas that require repair and provide evidence that re-pointing mortar will match the original in composition (i.e., ratio of lime, cement, sand and any additives), color, texture, and tooling. For extensive re-pointing work, a test patch should be prepared and be allowed to cure and will then be reviewed by the Tax Credit Manager either on site or through submission of a digital photograph. [Consult *Preservation Brief 2: Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings* (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-02-repointing.pdf>)]
- **Painting and Paint Removal:** The re-painting of existing, painted surfaces does not require lengthy discussion in the *Part 2 - Description of Rehabilitation*. The use and placement of historically appropriate paint colors will enhance the rehabilitation of the historic property, but it is not required. If painting previously unpainted brick or masonry is proposed, denial of certification may result. Removal of paint must be carried out in a manner that does not damage the building material. High pressure water-blasting can be damaging to wood siding and architectural features. The methods of paint removal must be specified in the *Part 2 - Description of Rehabilitation*. [Consult *Preservation Brief 10: Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork* (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-10-paint-problems-exterior-woodwork.pdf>)]
- **Porches:** Applicants should clearly indicate the extent of deterioration when discussing repair of historic porches. Non-existent porches should not be reconstructed unless there is good physical evidence of their design. [Consult *Preservation Brief 45: Preserving Historic Wood Porches* (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-45-wood-porches.pdf>)]
- **Roof:** The roof and related features including cresting, dormers, cupolas and chimneys, and the size, color, and patterning of the roofing material are extremely important in defining the building's overall historic character and a weather-tight roof is essential to the preservation of the entire building. Certain types of roofing such as slate, clay tile, or metal may be visually prominent, and their loss would negatively impact the overall significance of the historic building. If the roofing material is a character-defining feature of the historic building, then it is recommended that the roof be repaired with only the deteriorated or missing materials replaced. If the historic material is too deteriorated to repair, then replacement in-kind or with a compatible substitute material which conveys a similar visual appearance may be acceptable. For roofs where the original roofing material has already been replaced, restoration of original material is not required. Applicants should specify the type of existing

roofing material, the original roofing material (if known), and method and extent of roof repair. Additions of new roof features such as skylights and roof vents may be acceptable if they have a low profile and are not visible from the primary elevation. The *Part 2 - Description of Rehabilitation* should include documentation of their size and projection above the surface of the roof and the construction material. In addition, their location should be indicated in a drawing or sketch plan. Any repairs to or removal of chimneys should also be noted. Gutters and downspouts should generally have a baked enamel finish so that they can be painted to match the trim. [Consult *Preservation Brief 4: Roofing for Historic Buildings* (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-04-roofing.pdf>); *Preservation Brief 19: The Repair and Replacement of Historic Wooded Shingle Roofs* (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-19-wood-shingle-roofs.pdf>) and *Preservation Brief 29: The Repair, Replacement and Maintenance of Historic Slate Roofs* (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-29-slate-roofs.pdf>)]

- **Siding:** Specify the extent of deterioration, estimated percentage of replacement of siding that will be required, replacement material, and if applicable, cleaning and paint removal techniques. Justification for the use of replacement siding must be provided as well as the type of material and location of placement. The concealment of original materials with artificial siding reduces the architectural integrity of the historic building since most of the original surface is hidden from view. The use of artificial siding may also accelerate structural problems, as well as conceal them. Additionally, the installation of artificial siding materials often results in the removal of character-defining features such as corner boards, bracketed eaves, and door and window casings. Where artificial siding already exists, it may be replaced as part of a rehabilitation. Covering or replacing historic siding may result in a denial of certification.
- **Storefront Alterations:** Justify changes to storefronts and provide photographs of the areas to be altered. Information should be provided as to when the existing storefront was constructed and its current physical condition. If a reconstruction of the storefront is planned, state the basis for the proposed new storefront design. Applicants are strongly discouraged from introducing a storefront or new design element on the ground floor that alters the character of the structure and its relationship with the street or that causes destruction of significant historic materials. [Consult *Preservation Brief 11: Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts* (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-11-storefronts.pdf>)]
- **Windows:** Original windows are significant features in virtually all historic properties. Applicants are strongly encouraged to retain and repair historic windows. Replacement of original windows should occur only when the existing is severely deteriorated. The wholesale replacement of original windows is rarely necessary and is generally not accepted. Reasons other than complete deterioration, including peeling paint or paint build-up, rotten sills, broken muntins (dividing bars), broken glass, or energy efficiency, do not justify wholesale replacement. Where window replacement is proposed, indicate the condition of existing windows (sash, glazing, muntins, etc.) and the reasons for proposed replacement. Close-up photographs showing condition must be provided as evidence of severe deterioration. Where replacement of existing windows appears justified by supporting documentation and where the windows are an integral part of the historic building's design and character, replacement windows should match the original in material, size, pane configuration, color, trim details, and planar and reflective qualities. Replacement glass must be clear and non-reflective. Surface-applied muntins must match the originals in design. Scaled drawings comparing the existing windows with the replacement windows should be provided. The use of inappropriate replacement windows will result in denial of certification. For purposes of improving energy efficiency, installation of interior or exterior storm windows is recommended rather than replacing original windows. For storm windows, specify type, finish and location. Exterior aluminum storm windows are acceptable as long as the metal tracks are mounted so that they do not protrude from the face of the window opening; the meeting rail is aligned with that of the existing sash; and the finish is painted or baked-on enamel. [Consult *Preservation Brief 9: The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows* (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-09-wood-windows.pdf>) and *Preservation Brief 13: The Repair and Thermal Upgrading of Historic Steel Windows* (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-13-steel-windows.pdf>)]

INTERIOR:

The level of significance of interior spaces largely depends on whether the spaces are “primary” or “secondary.” Primary spaces are those that are important to the character of the historic building and should be preserved, while secondary spaces may be altered. In residences, primary spaces usually include parlors and living rooms, dining rooms, halls, and stairways. Secondary spaces may include bathrooms, kitchens, rear stairways, and most bedrooms.

- **Floor Plan:** An historic building’s floor plan is often one of the key elements in defining the historic character of a building. Since the layout of rooms is an important distinguishing feature of a building, changes to the floor plan should be limited to secondary spaces and should not affect character-defining features or primary spaces. Generally, walls should not be inserted into primary spaces, nor should the walls defining these primary spaces be removed. For projects that include changes to a building’s floor plan, a sketch floor plan of the building showing the existing room layout and the proposed alterations must be provided. This plan does not need to be professionally drafted but must be understandable and include major interior features.
- **Walls, Floors, and Ceilings:** The Standards encourage the repair and retention of these features. Replacement materials should convey the same visual appearance as the original. For example, gypsum wallboard, if finished smooth, is an appropriate substitute for flat plaster. In replacing walls or ceilings with wallboard, it is important that care be taken to maintain the historic relationship between any existing trim such as door and window casings, baseboards, and ceiling moldings. Changes in ceiling height are generally discouraged as is the furring-out of walls and exposing masonry surfaces unless the condition is supported by historical evidence. In the *Part 2 - Description of Rehabilitation*, be specific when describing existing materials and indicating whether they are original, and whether significant removal or repair is needed. Wooden floors may be restored, or they may be covered with wall-to-wall carpet.
- **Decorative Features and Ornamentation:** Interior features which are important in defining the character of an historic building should be repaired rather than replaced. Character-defining features include but are not limited to the following: columns, cornices, baseboards, fireplaces and mantels, historic paneling, wainscoting, doors, window and door casings, decorative plaster, and staircases. If original features need to be removed during rehabilitation, they should be re-installed in their original locations. The use of salvaged architectural features from other historic buildings is inappropriate if the effect is to create a “new” historic appearance. Be as descriptive as necessary to fully indicate the existing conditions and the nature of the proposed work. Discuss by room or by element (e.g. stairs, plaster moldings, ceiling and base moldings, mantels).
- **Door and Fire Code Issues:** Applicants are strongly encouraged to retain and repair historic doors. Any replacement doors should match the design of the originals.
- **Heating, Ventilating, and Air-conditioning (HVAC) Systems:** Installation of new HVAC systems should be planned to cause the least alteration possible to the building’s floor plan, interior features, and exterior elevations, and the least damage to the historic building materials. Installation of ducts, and pipes should not obscure character-defining features and should be concealed whenever possible within attics, crawl spaces, closets, service rooms, wall cavities or soffits. [Consult *Preservation Brief 3: Improving Energy Efficiency in Historic Buildings* (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-03-energy-efficiency.pdf>) and *Preservation Brief 24: Heating, Ventilating and Cooling Historic Buildings – Problems and Recommended Approaches* (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-24-heating-cooling.pdf>)]

ADDITIONS AND SITE WORK:

- **Additions:** New exterior additions must be compatible with respect to site, size, scale, material, and detailing. In general, additions should be placed so as to not be visible from the main façade of the building. New additions which overwhelm or significantly alter the historic character of the building may result in denial of certification. Site plans and elevation drawings of the new addition must be submitted. [Consult *Preservation Brief 14: New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings – Preservation Concerns* (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-14-exterior-additions.pdf>)]

- **ADA Compliance, including Handicapped Ramps:** If this work is included in the project, then a drawing or sketch elevation to show their impact on the historic building is required, and its location should be indicated on a site plan or sketch plan. [Consult *Preservation Brief 32: Making Historic Properties Accessible* (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-32-accessibility.pdf>)]
- **Site Work:** Because site work may affect the relationship of a structure to its site, change the historic landscape, or otherwise damage the historic character of the property, it is considered an important part of the rehabilitation project review and should be fully described in the *Part 2 - Description of Rehabilitation*. Avoid making changes to the ground level near the building except to achieve positive drainage away from the building. Plantings should be placed sufficiently away from the building so that roots will not damage the foundation, and moisture will not be trapped against the foundation. [Consult *Preservation Brief 39: Holding the Line: Controlling Unwanted Moisture in Historic Buildings* (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-39-controlling-moisture.pdf>)]

Online training and publications on rehabilitation (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/preservation-by-topic.htm>).

Rev. July 2025