

# COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS

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## THE U.S. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

36 C.F.R. § 67.7 (2001)

and

## GUIDELINES FOR ALTERATIONS TO HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

Adopted by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks on  
March 4, 1992

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CITY OF CHICAGO  
RICHARD M. DALEY, MAYOR

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Department of Zoning and Land Use Planning

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Commission on Chicago Landmarks

***The Commission on Chicago Landmarks was established in 1968 by city ordinance, and was given the responsibility of recommending to the City Council that specific landmarks be preserved and protected by law. The ordinance states that the Commission, whose ten members are appointed by the Mayor, can recommend any area, building, structure, work of art, or other object that has sufficient historical, community, or aesthetic value. Once the City Council acts on the Commission's recommendation and designates a Chicago landmark, the ordinance provides for the preservation, protection, enhancement, rehabilitation, and perpetuation of that Landmark. The Commission assists by carefully reviewing all applications for building permits pertaining to the designated Chicago Landmarks. This insures that any proposed alteration does not detract from the qualities that caused the landmark to be designated.***

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

*The Rules and Regulations of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks state that the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings (pages 1-3) and other guidelines adopted and published by the Commission (pages 4-10) govern the Commission in evaluating the effect of proposed work in a permit application. Please note that pages 1-2 of this booklet only contain the Secretary's Standards. For copies of the associated Secretary's Guidelines, please see page 3.*

### ***Introduction to the Standards***

The Secretary of the Interior is responsible for establishing standards for all programs under Departmental authority and for advising Federal agencies on the preservation of historic properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Standards for Rehabilitation (codified in 36 C.F.R. § 67 for use in the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program) address the most prevalent treatment. "Rehabilitation" is defined as "the process of returning a property to a state of utility, through repair or alteration, which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions and features of the property which are significant to its historic, architectural, and cultural values."

Initially developed by the Secretary of the Interior to determine the appropriateness of proposed project work on registered properties within the Historic Preservation Fund grant-in-aid program, the Standards for Rehabilitation have been widely used over the years--particularly to determine if a rehabilitation qualifies as a Certified Rehabilitation for Federal tax purposes. In addition, the Standards have guided Federal agencies in carrying out their historic preservation responsibilities for properties in Federal ownership or control; and State and local officials in reviewing both Federal and nonfederal rehabilitation proposals. They have also been adopted by historic district and planning commissions across the country.

The intent of the Standards is to assist the long-term preservation of a property's significance through the preservation of historic materials and features. The Standards pertain to historic buildings of all materials, construction types, sizes, and occupancy and encompass the exterior and interior of the buildings. They also encompass related landscape features and the building's site and environment, as well as attached, adjacent, or related new construction. To be certified for Federal tax purposes, a rehabilitation project must be determined by the Secretary to be consistent with the historic character of the structure(s), and where applicable, the district in which it is located.

### *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards*

- (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.
- (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.
- (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.
- (4) Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
- (5) Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
- (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.
- (7) Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
- (8) Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
- (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.
- (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.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The Department of the Interior publishes *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*. Copies may be purchased from the U.S. Government Printing Office by calling toll-free at 1-866-512-1800 or from their online bookstore at **<http://bookstore.gpo.gov>** The stock number is 024-005-01061-1.

A complete illustrated version of *The Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, as well as related additional technical preservation information and case studies, can also be found at the National Park Service website:  
**<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/rhb/>**

## COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS GUIDELINES FOR ALTERATIONS TO HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

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All work on designated Chicago Landmarks requiring City-issued permits is reviewed by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in order to protect and enhance the landmark qualities of the property. All properties, including vacant lots, within designated landmark districts, as well as individually designated buildings, fall under this review which is mandated by the *Municipal Code of Chicago (2-120-740)*. Decisions of the Commission are enforceable under law.

Landmark qualities are defined by the Commission as **significant historical or architectural features**. In the case of landmark districts, these features are confined to the exterior aspects of the property. Significant features define the specific qualities of each property, such as size, shape, design, detail, and materials, that contribute to its historic and architectural character. Significant features may vary from building to building or, in a district, may be common elements shared by many or all buildings such as the scale of a building or its location on the lot relative to neighboring buildings and the street.

Usually, significant features are those aspects of a property that are readily visible from the public way. A building's side or rear elevation that is less visible or not visible at all is generally less significant. However, these secondary elevations as well as rear coach houses or other less visible features of a property are significant features if they help to define the history and architecture of the property or district. The Commission's review and approval, or disapproval, of permit applications is intended to protect and enhance *all* significant historical or architectural features while allowing properties to be adapted for changing needs.

Properly and consistently maintaining significant features is the surest way of conserving landmarks. It is better to maintain something than to repair it later on because of improper maintenance or neglect; to repair rather than replace; and to replace in kind rather than redesign. This is the basic premise behind "The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation," listed at the beginning of this document, which the Commission uses as a guide to evaluate the appropriateness of proposed work. The procedures and criteria for permit review are fully outlined in the Commission's *Rules and Regulations*, Article IV "Permit Review." In addition to these, the Commission has adopted policies regarding many aspects of rehabilitation work. Some of these policies that address the most common types of rehabilitation work are outlined below and can be helpful in planning work on historic structures. Although intended here primarily for residential structures and historic districts, the underlying policies of the guidelines, in most cases, are applicable to non-residential structures. Because no two situations are exactly alike, each application of criteria and policy must be done on a case-by-case basis; however,

these policies will identify some of the Commission's concerns and the generally accepted preservation approach to specific rehabilitation problems.

The City recognizes the difficulties inherent in the rehabilitation of historic properties and, in particular, how building, zoning, or other codes may sometimes conflict with preservation concerns. Provisions within the Building Code [Sections 34 (13-200-100) and (13-200-110)] and Zoning Ordinance [Section 11.7A-3.(9)] allow their respective administrators discretion in applying these regulations to landmark properties. There are also two incentive programs for the rehabilitation of historic properties: The federal government offers an investment tax credit for a certified rehabilitation of historic properties that are income producing; and the State of Illinois allows an eight-year property tax assessment freeze for a certified rehabilitation of historic single-family, or condominium unit, owner-occupied property.

The Commission's staff is available to define the significant features of a property, explain and interpret policies, and provide information about the tax credit and property tax freeze incentives for rehabilitating historic properties. The Commission urges anyone planning a rehabilitation project to contact its staff preservation architects at (312) 744-3200, as soon as possible in the planning process to discuss and review proposed work.

**ADAPTIVE REUSE.** The Secretary of the Interior's Standard Number One states: "A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics [that is, significant historical or architectural features] of the building and its site and environment." Adapting the use of a building— from retail to residential or vice versa, for instance— to meet new needs has played a significant role in preserving historic structures. The Commission has no jurisdiction over the use of a property; land use is regulated by the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Chicago. However, the rehabilitation of a property to accommodate a new use does fall within the Commission's purview of seeking to preserve and enhance its significant features. As an example, in adapting a storefront structure to residential use, a significant architectural feature, namely the configuration, design and material of the storefront, must be retained despite the new residential use. Design solutions for adapting buildings to different uses must provide for the retention and rehabilitation of significant features.

**ADDITIONS.** Working within the existing envelope of an historic structure in order to accommodate space needs is always preferable to building an addition. Additions will be allowed *only* if they do not alter, change, obscure, damage, or destroy any significant features of the landmark or district. Of particular concern are the effects of an addition on a building's historic relationship to its site; on a building's size, shape, and roof line; and on individual design details, elements, or materials which constitute all or part of a building's significant features. If an addition is appropriate, its design will be guided by the criteria for new construction (see "New Construction").

**AWNINGS AND CANOPIES.** Traditionally, awnings and canopies have been used to shelter people and buildings from the summer sun and inclement weather. They are two elements of a larger passive system, which includes blinds, shutters, interior transoms, and even trees and

shrubs, which provided relief from excessive weather prior to the introduction of mechanical ventilation and air-conditioning. Awnings and canopies are allowed on historic structures when they are appropriate to the building, employed for traditional reasons (shelter), and use traditional shapes, forms and materials. The overall size, shape, and projection from the building must be in proper proportion and scale to the building and be contained within the window or door opening that they shelter. They must not obscure or spread out over adjacent wall surfaces. In most instances, the only acceptable material for awnings and canopies is canvas; exceptions will be considered if appropriate for historic reasons. Signs or lettering should be kept to a minimum, most appropriately a street number on canopies. The addition of logos or names for business identification will be considered on a case-by-case basis, but in no case will they dominate the visual character of the awning or canopy to which they are attached. Awnings and canopies used for the sole purpose of advertising and unrelated to their functional purpose are not acceptable (see "Signs").

**CLAPBOARDS.** Many historic frame buildings are covered by newer, supposedly maintenance-free, synthetic siding. Hidden beneath asphalt or asbestos shingles and, more recently, aluminum or vinyl siding are often the original wood clapboards or shingles, corner boards, and accompanying trim that are critical features of frame construction. Often this original material is in good-to-excellent condition, although in need of paint. Original siding must be retained and repaired rather than replaced with new material where restoration is feasible. Where original elements have been removed and replacement is necessary, the size and proportions of the missing elements must be duplicated. The outlines of missing pieces can often be deduced from the markings these materials have left on the underlying sheathing boards, from old photographs, or from similar structures in the area which have retained their original materials. When restoring recently uncovered wood, it is important to allow the old wood to weather somewhat before refinishing. Three or four months of exposure prior to painting will allow for much greater adhesion of paint to the wood surface and reduce the potential for paint failure.

Aluminum, vinyl, or other non-traditional siding materials are not appropriate for historic structures. Aside from aesthetic and historical reasons, synthetic sidings, because they are impermeable, can foster beneath their surfaces serious material and structural decay, which being out of sight, goes uncorrected. This unchecked damage can have serious and expensive consequences (see "Millwork").

**CURB CUTS.** Accommodating cars in historic districts presents a serious threat in maintaining the ambience of such neighborhoods. Most city blocks, however, were built with alleys which allow for access to the rear of the lot where barns or coach houses were built; now garages can be located there. New curb cuts along street frontages to allow for parking in the front of the property, or driveways leading to the side or rear yard, are not acceptable in historic districts where curb cuts are not characteristic of the original development. Such cuts erode the historic pedestrian scale and character of districts. In addition, they exacerbate the parking problem by removing curb side parking spaces.



**DEMOLITION.** The purpose of designating landmark districts is to conserve the historic building stock and encourage maintenance, repair, and restoration. Demolition is not a means toward this end. The Commission recognizes that in a few RARE situations demolition may be acceptable when a structure does not contribute to the landmark qualities and character of a district or is an intrusion on that character. Also, a building may be damaged beyond any reasonable means of repair. The criteria established to evaluate demolition applications are included in the Commission's *Rules and Regulations*, as are criteria for considerations of economic hardship.

**ENTRANCES.** Houses in Chicago's older inner city districts typically were set on high bases. Often a full story above grade, the entrance to the main floor was reached by a broad staircase. This main floor is often considered the second floor today, the staircase having been removed and the entrance relocated to street level. Removing staircases to relocate the entrance is not appropriate. When planning rehabilitation work on houses where this significant feature has been removed, consideration should be given to restoring the main floor entrance and staircase (see "Millwork" and "Stairs").

**EXCAVATIONS.** Owners are sometimes prompted to excavate front yards in order to provide additional light, ventilation, or patio space for ground floor/basement apartments. These excavations are inappropriate and destroy the historic relationship of a building to its site and the street. Front yard excavations are not permitted in historic districts. However, where original light wells or service courts exist and are significant features of the original design, they must be retained.

**FENCES.** In most of Chicago's historic districts, front yard fences were used for ornamental effect rather than security. Often no more than a low stone curb edged the front yard along the sidewalk, demarcating private from public property. Fences were generally composed of ornamental iron pickets between cast-iron posts, seldom more than three feet high. Most of these fences no longer survive; where they do, it is important to repair and maintain them. New fences should be designed to complement the character of the property to be enclosed. In most cases, they should be three feet or less in height and of simple design. Solid walls of masonry or wood and tall metal fences are almost always inappropriate and will not be approved.

**INAPPROPRIATE CHANGES MADE IN THE PAST.** Many buildings have been altered over time; often these alterations represent inappropriate changes. When rehabilitation work is being undertaken, consideration should be given to removing inappropriate additions and changes, restoring the building to its original design and character. Existing situations that are inappropriate may be maintained if no substantial work is to be undertaken on them. However, existing changes that are inappropriate may not be retained if they are to be rebuilt or substantially altered.

**MILLWORK.** The manufacture of doors, sashes, moldings, and other wood products (millwork) relied almost exclusively on solid lumber prior to World War II. Using tools and techniques developed by woodworkers over hundreds of years, a seemingly endless variety of

moldings, paneling, and trim evolved. Anyone who has ever tried to match a molding or a paneled door is all too aware of the choices. Intricate millwork can be found on even the simplest nineteenth-century cottage, and millwork design and craftsmanship is often the most significant architectural feature of a house. Every effort should be made to maintain and repair original millwork: stripping off successive layers of paint to reveal detail; regluing panels and frames; consolidating deteriorated wood; replacing worn parts, such as an overabundance of holes left by previous door locks and handles, by splicing in new wood (a "dutchman"); and properly finishing with a protective coat of paint or varnish can restore unique but seemingly irretrievable millwork to most houses (see "Clapboards").

**NEW CONSTRUCTION.** Some historic districts provide an opportunity for new construction. Dealing sensitively with the district's historic resources is of critical importance when designing infill buildings. The Commission encourages good contemporary design that respects the district's existing architectural and historic qualities, but does not necessarily replicate historic designs. Of particular concern are the issues of siting, size, shape, scale, proportion, materials, and the relationship of these to the prevalent character of the immediate neighbors and the district. Replication of original designs may be appropriate in some cases, for example, in replacing a missing unit in a group of row houses.

**PAINT.** Because a permit is not required, painting and paint color do not fall within the Commission's jurisdiction. However, paint can have a profound effect upon the appearance of a building and an impact on neighboring buildings. A few words of caution: masonry buildings should not be painted. Aside from the fact that historically they were rarely painted, painting a masonry building creates a continuing maintenance problem. Painting seals an otherwise porous material, trapping moisture in the masonry; once painted, periodic repainting is required. On the other hand, wood and metals other than lead and copper should be well protected by a good coat of paint. What color to paint a building is a more subjective matter. Many paint manufacturers today market appropriate period colors. It is also possible through paint analysis to determine the original colors used on a building. Duplicating the original colors through analysis is the preferred choice. The Commission's staff can assist property owners in determining original colors.

**PORCHES.** Front porches range in design from the common stoop to elaborate three-dimensional constructions, distinguished by their architectural style and craftsmanship. Original porches should be preserved through vigilant maintenance and repair because they are, more often than not, built of materials and in shapes and forms more susceptible to weathering than the buildings to which they are attached. Also, porches are decorative rather than strictly functional features and were never enclosed. They did not function as storm vestibules; most nineteenth-century houses have entrance foyers which serve this function. Front porches should not be enclosed. Erecting a new porch may or may not be appropriate depending on the design and character of the house. New porches, where appropriate, should be designed to be complementary, replicating the size, shape, and forms of the original porch.

**RAISING STRUCTURES.** Enlarging buildings by raising them and adding a new first floor was common at one time. Many of the cottages in the Old Town Triangle District, for example, were originally one and one-half stories high and set on wood pilings which were later replaced by masonry ground floor foundations, thus making them two and one-half stories high. Despite the historic precedents, raising structures in historic districts today is no longer appropriate because their existing condition is the historic one which the landmark designation seeks to conserve.

**ROOFS.** Roofs and roof lines are major elements which give buildings their picturesque silhouettes and characterize many of the building types and architectural styles of the late nineteenth-century. The gable roof of the frame cottages with which Chicago was rebuilt immediately after the fire of 1871 gives to them their characteristic shape. Alterations to historic roofs and roof lines are inappropriate. Additions to roofs that change characteristic roof shapes and lines will not be approved (see "Additions"). City houses, because they are not freestanding in a landscape, tend to have simplified roof lines; however, even the flat roof of the typical city house can be a most telltale feature. Its street face, the ubiquitous cornice of brackets, rosettes, and dentils, identifies its architectural style even if all other design elements are nondescript. A variety of gables, dormers, turrets, mansards, and more elaborate roof forms are found in the city. Roof shapes and materials are highly exposed to the elements. Good maintenance and repair are essential, particularly since many historic materials are today very expensive or more difficult to obtain. Materials such as copper and slate have extremely long life-spans when properly maintained; their use is often decorative, with the bulk of the roof not being visible and made of less expensive materials. If these materials deteriorate beyond repair, they must be replaced. Man-made products that approximate the texture, scale, and color of natural materials are available to a limited extent, but it is always better to replace with the original materials.

**SANDBLASTING.** The use of sandblasting or other abrasive and/or corrosive methods to clean buildings of paint or accumulated grime is not allowed. These methods destroy materials by eroding their hard exterior surfaces, exposing their softer interiors which are then subject to accelerated deterioration. There are acceptable alternatives to sandblasting for cleaning masonry, such as chemicals or water.

**SIGNS.** The Commission recognizes the need for commercial establishments to advertise. Such advertising has a long and rich history in America, one that has at times elevated the sign board to an art form. Conversely, signs on landmarks or in landmark districts can be a source of visual clutter when the effectiveness of the sign is equated with its size and flashiness, rather than its compatibility to the historic architectural character of the landmark or district. A sign's location, size, material, and means of illumination are areas of concern. Storefront structures often were designed to accommodate signs. The appropriate location in these cases is the one originally intended: typically for nineteenth-century buildings, this is the horizontal band above the storefront windows and below the second-story windows. In cases where the original sign location is not evident, the best location, and most likely the intended one, is within the glazed area of the storefront window so that the building frames the storefront without being obscured. Signs should be mounted parallel to and flush with the plane of the storefront. Signs projecting

over the sidewalk, perpendicular to the storefront, will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Bigger is not better when it comes to the size of the sign. The sign should be of a size appropriate and proportional to the storefront and building on which it is located. Traditional materials— wood, metal, paint— are preferred materials. Historically, most business signs were silver- or gold-leafed, or painted letters on glass. Lighting for signs should be external; signs should not be light boxes. Lighting elements such as neon tubing and exposed bulbs will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Awnings and canopies are not appropriate places for advertising (see "Awnings").

**STAIRS.** As previously stated under "Entrances," many Chicago houses are set on high bases and are reached by broad, tall staircases that are a characteristic feature of their design. Although some houses, particularly more elaborate ones, have stone stairs, most have stairs built of wood treads with closed wood risers. The staircase may or may not be enclosed below to provide basement access and storage. Because wood is readily subject to deterioration, proper maintenance is important in prolonging the life of wood elements. Replacing wood stairs with concrete or other materials is inappropriate. Replacement must be in kind. Stair railings typically were bent pipe rails with cast-iron newels and balusters. These features must be retained where they survive. New railings, if needed, should match the original rail system in design.

**WINDOWS.** Windows are frequently the most difficult aspect of any rehabilitation project. The first and best answer to the question of how to treat windows is not to replace them but rather to retain and repair the existing sash and frames. Where this is not possible, replacing only deteriorated parts— an new sill or a sash for instance— is preferable to total replacement. If total replacement is unavoidable, the replacement windows must match the historic windows in design and operation, material, glass size, muntin arrangements, profiles, and trim such as brick mold and sill. Seemingly minor changes in these elements can greatly alter the appearance of an historic building.

Often, window replacement is dictated by concerns for energy conservation, particularly replacing single-glazed sash with double-glazed sash. A wide variety of double-glazed units are available, some designed especially for historic buildings. However, properly weather-stripped, single- glazed sash can greatly reduce or eliminate air infiltration between sash and frame where most energy is lost. The cost of weather stripping is nominal compared to the price of replacement windows, yet the effect can be considerable.

*[Adopted March 4, 1992]*



**COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS**

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