

Goals and Objectives in Updating the Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties

In planning for its centennial in 2016, the National Park Service (NPS) in 2011 issued [*A Call to Action: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement*](#) to help chart a path for the Service's next 100 years. The plan's Action 25, What's Old is New, charges the NPS Cultural Resources Directorate to update The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties to ensure this guidance continues to reflect current historic preservation methods and technologies, show how historic structures can be made more sustainable, and support efforts to rebuild the economic vitality of rural and urban communities.

The existing four sets of treatment guidelines—[*Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings*](#)—were last revised in 1995, over twenty years ago. The Treatment Guidelines were developed to apply to a specific resource type—buildings—and to apply to a wide variety of building types, methods of construction, features, materials, and conditions. Consequently, they are meant to illustrate general approaches to work treatments, and not be case-specific or address exceptions or rare instances, and they continue to be applicable in most instances.

Since the Treatment Guidelines were last revised, many more buildings now qualify as “historic,” often featuring new materials and building systems, and there have been other advancements in preservation methods and technologies. The Guidelines are being updated with the following goals and objectives in mind:

- **Ensure** that the guidelines continue to address all types of historic buildings, including building materials, technologies, and systems representative of historic mid-century buildings.
- **Continue to reflect** the “best practices” in preservation.
- **Clarify** text/language to improve readability of the guidelines.
- **Feature** new illustrations in color, a greater number of illustrations, and illustrating a greater variety of building types, materials, and systems.

The updated version of the Treatment Guidelines follows the same organization as prior versions, but with an expanded overview of historic materials, systems, features, and specific issues, followed by the four sets of treatment standards and guidelines. Some sections have been renamed, expanded, or otherwise revised. The approaches to work treatments and techniques for each set of guidelines are listed in a two-column “Recommended”/“Not Recommended” format. The final version of the Guidelines will be more heavily illustrated than the current version, with more diverse examples, and will be produced in both a traditional hard copy and electronic version when issued.

Again, the Guidelines are meant to illustrate general approaches to work treatments, and are not meant to be highly detailed, case-specific, or address exceptions or rare instances. Furthermore, the Guidelines address recommended treatments for individual features which have been identified as important to the historic character of a property, and do not address the case-specific evaluations of character-defining features that must be made on an individual-property basis as well as whether specific treatments would meet the Standards in the context of an overall project.

When the *Call to Action* was being drafted, the NPS had already started work on guidance to address how to make historic buildings more sustainable. In 2011, the NPS issued [*The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Illustrated Guidelines on Sustainability for Rehabilitating Historic*](#)

Buildings. As the topic of sustainability is already addressed in detail in this publication, this guidance is not repeated in the Treatment Guidelines, but is instead incorporated by reference. Although specifically developed for the treatment of Rehabilitation, the Sustainability Guidelines are applicable to all the treatments. The NPS is also currently working on a companion, separate set of illustrated guidelines for historic buildings to address climate change and natural hazards as well as more detailed guidance on coastal/riverine flooding, storm surge, and sea level rise. These topics will be more fully addressed in this future guidance.

Background

The Secretary of the Interior is responsible under the National Historic Preservation Act for establishing standards for, and providing advice and guidance on, the preservation and protection of historic resources. *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* are regulatory for the purposes of grant-in-aid projects assisted through the National Historic Preservation Fund; otherwise, the Treatment Standards are intended as general guidance for work on historic buildings.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and the associated [*Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings*](#) were last published in 1995. The four Treatment Standards, revised in 1992, were codified as 36 CFR Part 68 in the July 12, 1995, *Federal Register* (Vol. 60, No. 133), and replaced prior versions from 1978 and 1983. The 1995 version of the Guidelines replaced those published in 1979, and later greatly expanded in 1983, to accompany the earlier Standards. The Guidelines are not regulatory, but are intended to provide guidance to property owners, design, construction, and trade professionals, public agencies, private organizations, and the general public in applying the Treatment Standards.

The Standards for Rehabilitation are the most used of the four Treatment Standards and are separately codified (with a slight difference in wording) as 36 CFR Part 67.7 as part of the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program. The Rehabilitation Standards (but not the Rehabilitation Guidelines) are regulatory for rehabilitation projects to qualify as certified rehabilitations under the tax incentives program, but they are also used at the federal, state and local levels to guide work on historic buildings. Historic preservation and planning commissions across the country have also adopted them to guide their design review processes.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings were revised in 1990 and replaced earlier versions; an illustrated version of the guidelines was published in 1992. *The Standards for Rehabilitation with new Illustrated Guidelines on Sustainability for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* were published in 2011. The Standards for Rehabilitation were reviewed in 2006 as part of a National Park System Advisory Board report and determined to be appropriate and not in need of revision.

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