City of Jacksonville
Historic Preservation Commission
WINTER 2009 NEWSLETTER

The Myth of the Big, Bad Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation

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The Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation…. Sounds kinda scary, doesn't it? Especially when you consider these Standards are a kind of Ten Commandments in the world of historic preservation. Well, if you are (or know of) a property owner who wants to make some changes to his/her building and doesn't like the idea of someone else telling them what they can and can't do to their private property, then yes, these Standards do SOUND scary. But the truth is, they aren't. They are actually a very common sense approach to utilizing a historic building in an economical way but without reducing the building's historic integrity.

So let's break it down. First, the "Secretary of Interior's" part simply refers to the fact that someone had to create these "Standards" in the first place. In this case, the someone is the head of the Department of the Interior that administers the National Park Service. The National Park Service needed Standards in order to review projects seeking federal historic tax credits. Without the Standards, there would be no basis for anybody deciding what kind of work would or would not have a detrimental impact on a historic building. Nowadays, the Standards are used not only by the National Park Service but every State Historic Preservation Office and Local Historic District Commission as THE BASIS for reviewing all projects within their purview.

As for "Rehabilitation", well that's the best part. The Standards define rehabilitation 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." Meaning, necessary repairs and alterations to a building are okay as long as the overall historic value of the building is preserved and retained. To state it uber-simply, if a property owner is doing work to their building they shouldn't make the building any less historic than when they started.

The 10 Standards for Rehabilitation follow:

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.

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Jacksonville Main Street has copies of the Secretary of Interior Standards available, as well as contact information for the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and Officers if you would like more details on the Standards, tax credits, or suggestions for work… REMEMBER that most work should be pre-approved by your local Historic Preservation Commission in order to receive any benefits.

The Standards Myth… (cont'd)

Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archaeological 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.

If you're curious how these Standards apply to a specific type of project, the National Park Service has several an "Online Education" section on their website that includes web classes, case studies, and checklists. They even have an "Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings."

So see, the Standards aren't that scary after all.

HELPFUL LINKS: use these internet links to get more preservation information…

PreservationDirectory.com
www.cr.nps.gov
www.preservationnation.org
www.illinoismainstreet.org
www.state.il.us/hpa

Energy Efficiency in Older Homes

There are many ways to raise the efficiency rating of your historic property. This list of resources from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency can help you make some important decisions that can ultimately save you money and make your home more comfortable.

Home Energy Saver: The first web-based do-it-yourself energy audit tool
http://hes.lbl.gov/

Energy Efficient Rehab Advisor (home owner tool)
http://rehabadvisor.pathnet.org/index.asp

Energy Star (finding energy efficient appliances and systems)
www.energystar.gov

Target Finder (Energy Star tool for assessing efficiency goals for commercial properties)
www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=target_finder

Smart Energy Design Assistance Center - University of Illinois
http://smartenergy.arch.uiuc.edu/index.html

http://smartenergy.arch.uiuc.edu/pdf/ECRMHandout.pdf

Do It Yourself Energy Assistance Analyzer
http://www.energyguide.com/audit/baintro.asp

Building Energy Software Tools
http://www.eere.energy.gov/buildings/tools_directory/subjects_sub.cfm

Boulder CO: Historic Building Energy Efficiency Guide
www.bouldercolorado.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=8217&Itemid=22

Jacksonville's Historic Preservation Commission is Here to Help You…

Our goal is to help preserve and promote the historical and architectural structures in Jacksonville's historic district as well as the rest of our city. The Commission meets on the first Monday of each month, with individual committees meeting separately throughout the month. The committees also include other non-commission members of the community who have an interest in the preservation of Jacksonville.

The Commission has resource materials available to the public to help you in repair, restoration and renovation of your historic home. A resource library is being set up at the Jacksonville Public Library to provide specialized information to homeowners on maintaining or researching the history of your home.

Before you start any project, check with the City Development Office (formerly Building Inspections at 479-4620) to see what is required. Contact the Historic Preservation Commission early to get feedback and any required certificates before commencing work… you may qualify for even more incentives if you ask!

You can also offer to get involved with the Commission! Check us out on the web: www.jacksonvilleil.com