



CHAPTER 3 – DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The principles upon which these design guidelines are based are the foundation of historic preservation practice and have been developed over decades of professional experience working with historic buildings and landscapes. The principles are relatively simple in concept and may be applied to a wide variety of issues and conditions. Every proposed construction project involving a historic building has its distinctive attributes. The design principles for historic preservation are flexible enough to address differing issues, needs, and conditions in a manner that achieves the best possible outcome.

Chapter 3 provides background on several terms and concepts used throughout these design guidelines, including *significance*, *integrity*, and *authenticity*. Appreciation of the meaning and concepts behind these terms helps with understanding of the design principles outlined in the guidelines and how they are applied. Most important in this chapter is its discussion of the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. The Standards are the touchstone for all decision making regarding the treatment of historic buildings and other resources.

Wellesley has the distinction of being densely developed with high quality historic neighborhoods. People want to live in Wellesley because of its distinctive character, and most properties are well maintained. The design principles outlined below provide guidance in decision making about appropriate changes to historic properties.

ACCOMMODATING CHANGE WITHIN A HISTORIC CONTEXT

The following general principles are incorporated throughout these design guidelines in describing the preferred treatment of historic buildings in Wellesley. They outline how needed change may be accommodated in the Town's historic neighborhoods and should be considered in the planning and design of new projects. These principles are based upon the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, which are discussed further later in this chapter.

- Continue to use a property as it was designed to be used, or find a new use that minimizes necessary changes to character defining features.
 - Identify and retain distinguishing building and landscape features, qualities, and characteristics.
 - Maintain, protect, and repair authentic character defining features, materials, and finishes. If features are deteriorated beyond repair, replace them in-kind. Retain authentic historic building fabric to the maximum extent possible.
 - If a feature is missing or must be removed and it is desired that it be replaced, use accurate documentation to guide the replacement work.
 - Respect the evolution of historic changes, fashion, taste, and use – do not try to “improve” the design of authentic building features.
 - Avoid installation of conjectural “historic” features.
 - Do not use maintenance methods or materials that damage significant building and landscape fabric.
- Needed change can usually be accommodated in a sensitive manner that helps strengthen historic character. Where new construction is required:
- Design new construction in a contemporary but respectful manner. Additions and alterations to historic buildings and landscapes should speak of their own time but should be compatible with the character of the existing resource.
 - Follow an established design process that identifies character defining features, explores a range of possible design alternatives, and selects a workable alternative that maximizes the preservation of historic building fabric.
 - Accommodate the program or use driving needed changes to the maximum extent possible without significantly altering or destroying the character of existing resources.
 - Respect the surrounding building and landscape context.
 - Maintain a high quality of design and craftsmanship.
 - Existing buildings often have multiple layers of history and change that are of significance, should be preserved, and can inspire creative and compatible design solutions for new construction.
 - New construction should not destroy character defining building or landscape features or materials.
 - Understand that future change will continue to occur. Make allowances for future change in new work.

SIGNIFICANCE, INTEGRITY, AND AUTHENTICITY

The concepts of *significance*, *integrity*, and *authenticity* are central to the design principles for historic preservation and are referenced throughout these guidelines. The background and meaning regarding these concepts are discussed below and should be helpful in providing context for specific recommendations in the design guidelines.

Historic Significance – In historic preservation, historic districts, buildings, and other resources are evaluated for *historic significance* according to established professional criteria developed in association with listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Those criteria state that:

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A** That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, or
- B** That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C** That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D** That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Wellesley’s historic neighborhoods possess historic resources significant to all four categories listed above.

Wellesley’s neighborhoods are representative of the broad patterns of history in Massachusetts and the nation, particularly with respect to education and residential development in conjunction with a major urban center. Historically significant persons have lived in Wellesley and left their mark on the Town’s physical presence in a variety of ways.

Wellesley’s historical development has resulted in the construction of buildings that embody the distinctive characteristics of type, period, and method of construction for the region included in category C above, particularly with respect to residential building. Archeological resources are significant because they are likely to yield information about the region’s history and prehistory.

Historic Significance is present in districts, sites, and buildings that:

- Are associated with events contributing to the broad patterns of our history,
- Are associated with the lives of significant persons,
- Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or
- Have yielded or may yield important information.

Integrity — Integrity is the authenticity of a property’s historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property’s period of significance. The seven qualities of integrity, as defined by the National Register program, are location, setting, feeling, association, design, workmanship, and materials.

Integrity measures the degree to which the historically significant materials, features, and characteristics of a resource still exist. Integrity is frequently assessed by how much of a resource’s historic fabric is intact. Historic building fabric includes features (such as porches, windows, stairways, and trim), and materials (such as wood, stone, and plaster). Authentic woodwork, brickwork, entrances and windows and other historic fabric that survives help make the historical significance of a resource visible.

When a resource retains a great deal of authentic historic fabric, the integrity of the resource is generally considered to be “high.” When there is little historic fabric remaining, integrity is generally considered to be “low.” Preservation efforts frequently focus on preserving the integrity of a resource by preserving historic fabric. Retaining the integrity of a resource is of paramount importance in preservation.

Historic significance accrues to a building or resource over time, and changes that have occurred to a resource can be historically significant.

Many historic buildings, for example, incorporate a mixture of stylistic elements that have been added to an original structure over many years. These additions and alterations are a part of the evolution of the building. They contribute to its story and significance and therefore also contribute to its integrity.

For instance, an 1890s Victorian porch may have been added to an 1850s vernacular farmhouse. Today, that porch would be over one hundred and twenty years old. The porch

is part of the richness of the building’s historical development, and it is a record of the changing ownership, values, perceptions, and events even though it is not part of the “original” farmhouse. Removing such a feature would destroy that record and would probably diminish the overall integrity of the resource.

Integrity measures the degree to which the historically significant materials, features, and characteristics of the resource still exist. When a resource retains a great deal of authentic historic fabric, the integrity of the resources is generally considered to be “high.”

Authenticity – The term *authenticity* in historic preservation is defined as:

- (1) the character of an historic property representing a substantial proportion of original fabric and materials, and
- (2) the interpretation of an historic property based on the understanding of its history and the characteristics of the culture or cultures that created it.

Authenticity related to original historic fabric is a physical manifestation – the preservation of authentic historic fabric is central to the treatment recommendations included in these design guidelines.

Authenticity related to the interpretation of a historic property is associated with the meaning and historic significance attributed to the property.

Integrity vs. Condition – While the *integrity* of a historic resource reflects the presence of authentic materials and features, the *condition* of the resource concerns its appearance and structural soundness.

A building with a sagging roof, peeling paint, and broken windows may be in poor condition but may at the same time have a high degree of integrity. The foundation may need to be rebuilt, the walls may need to be repainted, and window panes may need to be replaced. Doing so may improve the building's condition, but if these steps are taken without regard for retaining authentic historic fabric, the building's integrity may be diminished.

Maintaining a building in good condition may seem at odds with maintaining its integrity, but decisions about condition or integrity can be balanced if appropriate measures are taken.

Appropriate maintenance procedures performed throughout the history of a building will maintain its condition *and* preserve its integrity. Inappropriate maintenance or lack of maintenance frequently leads to a loss of historic fabric and integrity.

In appropriately maintaining a building or other resource, it is usually preferable to retain authentic historic fabric even if that fabric is not in the best condition, provided that there is no threat of further deterioration to the structure. When authentic historic fabric cannot be retained, it should be replaced in-kind (with identical materials and construction).

Authenticity refers to the character of a historic property representing a substantial proportion of original fabric and materials.

PRESERVATION PRINCIPLES AND TREATMENTS

The recommendations of these design guidelines are informed and guided by principles of historic preservation that have been developed and honed by practitioners in the field over the years. Preservation is a practical discipline that can accommodate growth and change while continuing to preserve the characteristics that make a place special. As emphasized above, the principles that have been developed in the field of historic preservation in general recognize the importance of preserving authentic historic fabric to the maximum extent possible.

Building uses come and go, but once lost, original historic fabric can never be recovered. The maintenance and preservation of original historic fabric, features, materials, and design elements, therefore, is central to a sound preservation approach.

The principles of historic preservation are embodied in the topic of *Preservation Treatments* and in *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, both of which are discussed below.

Preservation Treatments

The historic preservation field uses a variety of terms to describe the treatments that may be applied to historic buildings and landscapes. Although sometimes these terms are used loosely in discussion, they have specific meanings that are important to distinguish. The four key preservation treatments include: Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction.

Preservation is defined as the process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property. Work, including preliminary measures to protect and stabilize features, generally focuses on the ongoing

maintenance and repair of historic materials and features. Removals, extensive replacement, alterations, and new additions are not appropriate.

Preservation stresses protection, repair, and maintenance and is a baseline approach for all historic resources. As the selected treatment for a historic property, preservation implies minimal or no change. It is therefore strictly applied only to buildings and resources of extraordinary significance that should not be altered.

In Wellesley, highly significant early buildings such as eighteenth century churches are appropriate for preservation treatment.

Rehabilitation is defined as the process of creating a compatible use in a historic property through carefully planned minimal alterations and compatible additions. Often referred to as adaptive reuse, rehabilitation protects and preserves the historic features, materials, elements, and spatial relationships that convey historical, cultural, and architectural values.

Rehabilitation acknowledges the need to alter or add to a property to meet continuing or new uses while retaining historic character. New, expanded, or upgraded facilities should be designed to avoid impacts to historic elements. They should also be constructed of compatible materials. Retention of original historic fabric should be a primary consideration in undertaking a program of rehabilitation and adaptive reuse.

Rehabilitation is perhaps the most important and widely used treatment in the field of historic preservation, particularly in communities that are experiencing change and adapting to new uses. This includes the kinds of residential changes that are driving new projects impacting historic homes and neighborhoods in Wellesley. Rehabilitation is the appropriate treatment for most historic residential and commercial buildings throughout the Town.

Restoration refers to returning a resource to its appearance at a specific previous period of its history. Restoration is the process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular time by means of removal of features from other periods in its history and the reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period.

In restoring a property to its appearance in a previous era, historic plans, documents, and photographs should be used to guide the work. Limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems, as well as code-related work to make a property functional, are all appropriate within a restoration project.

Restoration is usually only undertaken for buildings of special significance where returning it to its appearance during a particular era is of importance, perhaps for educational or interpretive purposes or perhaps just because of the building's quality. Restoration is seldom undertaken in active residential neighborhoods.

Reconstruction is defined as the process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a non-surviving historic property using new construction for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its original location.

A reconstruction is a new resource made to replace an historic resource that has been lost. Reconstruction is a rarely used preservation treatment applicable primarily in educational and interpretive contexts.

Of these four terms:

- *Preservation* requires retention of the greatest amount of historic fabric, features, and materials.
- *Rehabilitation* acknowledges the need to alter or add to a property to meet continuing or new uses while retaining historic character.

- *Restoration* allows for an accurate depiction of the property's appearance at a particular time in its history.
- *Reconstruction* establishes a framework for re-creating vanished historic elements with new materials.

Preservation and Rehabilitation are the most appropriate and applicable treatments for most historic buildings and landscapes in Wellesley.

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This includes the kinds of residential changes that are driving new projects impacting historic homes and neighborhoods in Wellesley.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards

The philosophy that guides the recommendations in these design guidelines is based on a set of guidelines entitled *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, commonly called the "Secretary of the Interior's Standards" or simply the "Standards."

The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards* were created by historic preservation professionals to provide guidance in the appropriate treatment of historic resources. The *Standards* were first established by the federal government in 1966 to provide guidelines for the appropriate treatment of buildings and resources impacted by federal projects. Because of their usefulness, they have been adopted throughout the field of historic preservation.

All federally funded and permitted activities affecting historic resources are evaluated with respect to these standards, including the use of rehabilitation tax credits. The *Standards* were developed specifically to prevent unintended damage to or loss of historic resources by federal actions, such as those that occurred as the result of the wholesale demolition of historic neighborhoods through urban renewal as occurred in urban areas in the 1950s and 60s.

An individual set of standards was developed for each of the four preservation treatments discussed above. Just as the treatment of Rehabilitation is appropriate for most projects, the ***Standards for Rehabilitation*** are applicable to most projects being undertaken for historic buildings and landscapes in Wellesley.

In the language of community planners, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards* are a list of "best practices" for historic preservation. They are a touchstone for all activities affecting historic buildings and landscapes and help ensure that important issues about the care of historic buildings and landscapes are not forgotten in the process of making

decisions about other issues. When the *Standards* are used in the context of a new construction project involving an historic building, they provide a starting point for the discussion of proposed changes to the building's historic character and fabric. They were developed to ensure that policies toward historic resources were applied uniformly, even if the end result may be different in every case.

In the language of community planners, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards* are a list of "best practices" for historic preservation.

They provide the basis for the review of proposed projects in Wellesley's historic districts.

All preservation activities, whether they are publicly or privately funded, can be informed and enhanced by understanding the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*. Because the *Standards* outline a sensitive approach for assessing changes to historic properties, they are often included in design guidelines and ordinances that govern activities affecting local historic districts. They provide the basis for the review of proposed projects in Wellesley's historic districts as outlined in Chapter 4 and throughout these design guidelines.

The *Standards* articulate basic principles that are fundamental to historic preservation. Although they have been modified over the years to accommodate changing views of historical significance and treatment options, their basic message has remained the same.

The durability of the *Standards* is testimony not only to their soundness, but also to the flexibility of their language. They provide a

philosophy and approach to problem solving for those involved in managing the treatment of historic buildings, rather than a set of solutions to specific design issues. Following a balanced, reasonable, and disciplined process is often more important than the exact nature of the treatment option that is chosen. Instead of predetermining an outcome in favor of retaining or recreating historic features, the *Standards* help ensure that the critical issues are considered.

For federal projects and federal agencies, the language of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* is codified in 36 CFR Part 68 (the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 36, *Parks, Forests and Public Property*, Chapter 1 *National Park Service, Department of the Interior*, Part 68). A related federal regulation, 36 CFR Part 67, addresses the use of the *Standards* in the certification of projects receiving federal rehabilitation tax credits.

The *Standards* are published by the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, and are available online, including definitions for the four preservation treatments discussed above (NPS 2018).

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are particularly useful when considering the appropriate maintenance of historic buildings; the alteration of older buildings as necessary for reuse, safety, and accessibility; and the construction of new buildings in an historic context.

The ten standards that comprise the *Standards for Rehabilitation* are quoted below followed by a brief discussion of the implications of each. Additional discussion of the *Standards for Rehabilitation* may also be found online.

STANDARD 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.*

Standard 1 recommends compatible use in the context of adaptive reuse and changes to historic buildings and landscapes. This standard encourages property owners to find uses that retain and enhance historic character, not detract from it. The work involved in reuse projects should be carefully planned to minimize impacts on historic features, materials, and spaces. The destruction of character defining features should be avoided.

STANDARD 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.*

Standard 2 recommends the retention and preservation of character defining features. It emphasizes the importance of preserving integrity and as much existing historic fabric as possible. Alterations that repair or modify existing historic fabric are preferable to those that require total removal.

STANDARD 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.*

Standard 3 focuses on authenticity and discourages the conjectural restoration of an entire property, feature, or design. It also discourages combining and/or grafting historic features and elements from different properties and constructing new buildings that appear to be historic. Literal restoration to an historic appearance should only be undertaken when detailed documentation is available and when the significance of the resource warrants restoration. Reconstruction

of lost features should not be attempted without adequate documentation.

STANDARD 4 – *Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.*

Standard 4 recognizes that buildings change, and that many of these changes contribute to a building's historic significance.

Understanding a building's history and development is just as important as understanding its original design, appearance, and function. This point should be kept in mind when considering treatments for buildings that have undergone many changes.

Most historic buildings contain a visual record of their own evolution. This evolution can be identified, and changes that are significant to the history of the building should be retained. The opportunity to compare multiple periods of time in the same building lends interest to the structure and helps communicate changes that have occurred within the larger landscape and community context.

STANDARD 5 – *Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.*

Standard 5 recommends preserving the distinctive historic components of a building or landscape that represent its historic character. Workmanship, materials, methods of construction, floor plans, and both ornate and typical details should be identified prior to undertaking work.

STANDARD 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.*

Standard 6 encourages property owners to repair historic character defining features instead of replacing them when historic features are deteriorated or even missing. In cases where deterioration makes replacement necessary, new features should closely match historic conditions in all respects. Before any features are altered or removed, property owners are urged to document existing conditions with photography and notes. These records assist future choices that are appropriate to the property's historic character.

STANDARD 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.*

Standard 7 warns against using chemical and physical treatments that can permanently damage historic features. Many commercially available treatments are irreversibly damaging. Sandblasting and harsh chemical cleaning, in particular, are extremely harmful to wood and masonry surfaces because they destroy the material's basic physical properties and speed deterioration.

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

Standard 8 addresses the importance of below ground prehistoric and historic features. This issue is of most importance when a construction project involves excavation. An assessment of a site's

archeological potential prior to work is recommended. If archeological resources are present, some type of mitigation should be considered. Solutions should be developed that minimize the need for excavation of previously unexcavated sites.

STANDARD 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 shall 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.*

STANDARD 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.*

Standards 9 and 10 are linked by issues of the compatibility and reversibility of additions, alterations, and new construction. Both standards are intended to 1) minimize the damage to historic fabric caused by building additions, and 2) ensure that new work will be different from, but compatible with, existing historic conditions. Following these standards will help to protect a building's historic integrity.

In conclusion, the basis for the *Standards* is the premise that historic resources are more than objects of aesthetic merit – they are repositories of historical information. It is important to reiterate that the *Standards* provide a framework for evaluating preservation activities and emphasize preservation of historic fabric, honesty of historical expression, and reversibility. All decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis. The level of craftsmanship, detailing, and quality of materials should be appropriate to the significance of the resource.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

More information is available about historic preservation and the appropriate treatment of historic buildings. The Massachusetts Historical Commission (the Commonwealth's officially designated state historic preservation office) and Preservation Massachusetts (a state-wide non-profit organization) provide information, conduct training workshops, are generally available for technical assistance, and can be accessed online.

Many preservation architects and planners in Massachusetts are experienced in work with historic buildings and historic communities. Experienced consultants should be retained in the design of most construction projects and should oversee the work of contractors.

Another important source of information is the National Park Service (NPS) website, www.nps.gov and the website of its Cultural Resources Division, www.cr.nps.gov. Technical information about preserving historic buildings is available through the NPS Technical Preservation Services. Printed versions of these materials are also available for purchase. Key reference materials posted on the National Park Service websites include:

Preservation Briefs – The NPS has published the *Preservation Briefs* since 1975, and over fifty of them have now been created. Each of these briefs addresses a specific preservation issue. They are designed to be easy-to-read guides on preserving, rehabilitating and restoring historic buildings. Preservation Briefs are available online at the NPS Technical Preservation Services website: <https://www.nps.gov/tps/about.htm>.

Preservation Tech Notes – The *Preservation Tech Notes* series and *ITS Bulletins* have been prepared by preservation specialists for the NPS. These publications are technical guides intended for preservation professionals such as architects, contractors, and maintenance personnel, as well as for owners and

developers of historic properties. They provide practical information on traditional practices and new techniques for sensitively maintaining and preserving cultural resources.

Over 45 of the Tech Notes are available to the public, and most are available online at the NPS Technical Preservation Services website: <https://www.nps.gov/tps/about.htm>.

National Register Bulletins – The NPS bulletin series provides guidance in the documentation, evaluation, and nomination of historic sites to the National Register. The series is divided into four sections: The Basics, Property Types, Technical Assistance, and General Guidance. Several additional brochures about National Register programs are also available. They may be accessed online at <https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/>.

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