

**The American Institute  
of Architects**

**GUIDE TO**

**HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION**



Following the passage of the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 by Congress, the cultural and economic values of historic preservation have become widely recognized and have moved preservation issues into the forefront of public policy and popular interest.

Historic preservation is a general term that refers to several kinds of treatments of historic properties. As described by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, the treatments for historic properties may include preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction. While some of these treatments may overlap, the accepted definitions are as follows:

**Preservation:** applying the measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of a historic property. Preservation work generally focuses on the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic fabric rather than extensive replacement or new construction.

**Rehabilitation:** adapting a property for continuing or new compatible use through repair, alteration, and additions, while preserving those portions or features that convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.

**Restoration:** accurately depicting the form, materials, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time. Restoration retains as much of the historic period fabric as possible. Inconsistent features may need to be removed and missing features faithfully reconstructed in accordance with the restoration period.

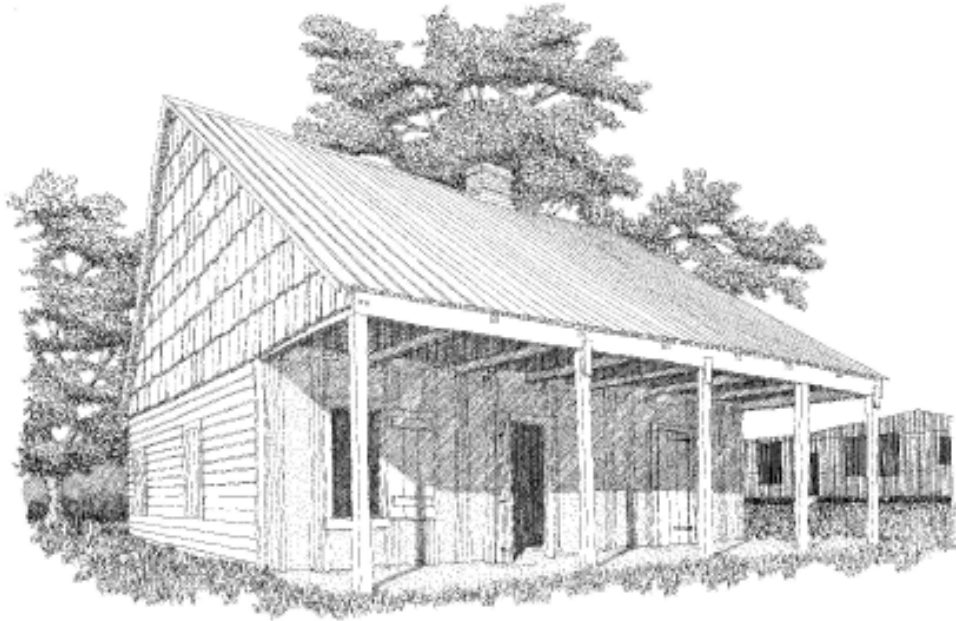
**Reconstruction:** depicting by means of new construction the form, materials, features, and character of a historic property that no longer exists, as it appeared at a particular period of time, in its historic location.

#### **HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

How a historic property may be treated depends largely on its historical significance and surviving integrity. A property of major significance requires thorough historical research and knowledgeable attention. Such a property is worthy of preservation or restoration.

A property of less significance may offer greater flexibility in its use and require less stringent treatment. Rehabilitation for adaptive use may be an appropriate procedure for such properties. Factors that contribute to historical significance include:

- A property's integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.
- A building that is an excellent example of a style, period, or method of construction.
- A site where a major historical event occurred, or an important person lived or worked.
- A structure that represents a turning-point in architectural design, planning, or technology.
- A site that has yielded, or is likely to yield, important historical information.



*The Badin-Roque House, Natchez, Louisiana. Drawn by Michael Tabb, 2000. Courtesy of Historic American Buildings Survey, U.S. National Park Service.*

A property should be compared to similar examples to establish its relative value. Properties are also evaluated on the basis of their local, state, national, or global significance.

### **IDENTIFICATION OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES**

Being able to identify significant historic properties is a critical step in the entire historic preservation process. Identification systems and surveys exist in the United States at various levels:

**Local Lists** are usually prepared by a municipal landmark commission. Properties and districts may be listed as local landmarks.

**Statewide Surveys** are prepared by your State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and may list properties and districts as local landmarks. States also recommend listings for the National Register.

The **National Register of Historic Places** is administered by the National Park Service and the SHPO in each state. This register lists historic properties that meet the criteria of the National Register and may be of local, state, or national significance. More than 50,000 individual and historic district properties are currently included on the Register.

**National Historic Landmark** designations are made by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and are administered by the National Park Service. This list is limited

to properties of national significance and involves strict criteria, thorough documentation, and a more rigorous review process than the National Register. Fewer than 5,000 properties have been designated as National Landmarks.

The **World Heritage List** is administered by the International Committee on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). This survey was initiated by the United Nations in 1972 and is limited to sites of worldwide significance. Only 18 sites in the United States have been designated as World Heritage Sites. Independence Hall in Philadelphia and Mesa Verde in Colorado are examples.

These inventories provide critical information for local, state, and federal planning. Being identified as a historic property usually places no legal restriction on the owner's use or treatment of the property. Locally listed properties and districts may be subject to a review of changes made to the historic qualities of the properties. However, formal listing may protect a property from adverse impacts of publicly funded projects, such as highways. Formal listing may also make a commercial property eligible for grants or tax credits that encourage preservation treatment in accordance with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Surveys also enable property owners to understand the relative significance of their buildings and the kind

of professional assistance that will be needed to accomplish the proper treatment.

## **PRESERVATION SERVICES**

Understanding the character defining features of a property and prescribing the appropriate treatment require specialized experience and knowledge. Architects—trained in materials and methods of construction, building design, code compliance, and architectural history—are usually qualified to perform services related to the adaptive use or rehabilitation of older buildings.

Historic preservation is not simply a matter of competently repairing a building or altering it for a new use. It requires a creative design process just as a new building does. This involves collecting and analyzing information, evaluating the impact or alternative treatments, conceptualizing how the building may be used or interpreted in the future, and then implementing a series of coordinated design decisions to achieve a set of project goals.

The use of an architect who has specialized education and experience in historic preservation is recommended for buildings that have substantial historical significance and therefore require more skilled preservation, accurate restoration, or authentic reconstruction. Historical architects are familiar with the historic review process and tax credit procedures.

Depending on the type of historic preservation project, necessary services range from those traditionally provided by architects in the normal “design-bid-construction” sequence to the varied services of an interdisciplinary team of specialists led by the architect. The specific services required for your project should be decided in concert with your architect. These may include the following services, broken down into phases and a logical sequence:

### **Research, Investigation, and Analysis Phase**

**Preliminary survey:** describes the property in general terms and evaluates its level of integrity, physical condition, and probable historical significance. Recommends historic preservation work plan, professional services that will be needed, and preliminary cost estimates for continuing work.

**Archival and literature search:** locates, identifies, and assembles original drawings, historic photographs, and written accounts or descriptions that will aid in

tracing the development of the structure through different periods.

**Statement of significance:** following a period of historical research, it will be possible to prepare a more detailed and accurate account of the property’s significance and define the elements of its integrity. Information in this statement will be essential to determining the best work plan and treatment for the structure. The statement will also be of value in relation to surveys, lists, planning actions, grants, and appropriations. The statement may need to be amplified as site investigations and analysis progress.

**Documentation:** prepares measured drawings, collects field notes, and takes photographs that will provide a record of the property as found.

**Condition survey:** utilizes the record drawings and photographs; describes and maps the condition of the structure; and identifies the types, locations, and probable causes of problems.

**Conservation analysis:** investigates and monitors the structure in relation to its behavior and composition. Recommends procedures for stabilizing the building, controlling the interior environment, minimizing further deterioration, and repairing damaged parts.

**Fabric analysis:** analyzes the materials, workmanship, and equipment of the structure in relation to their physical nature, sources, and dates of construction.

**Archaeological research:** investigates below-ground project area—particularly on historically important sites—to recover, protect, and evaluate artifacts and earlier periods of occupation and use. This research often provides important information for restoration or reconstruction.

**Building chronology:** traces the development of the structure through its construction periods, ownership, and uses. Conclusions are based on information gathered in the fabric analysis and the archival and literature search. This analysis usually takes the form of text and a series of chronological plan overlays.

**Landscape analysis:** surveys existing conditions and historic significance of landscape design, features, and other site considerations.

**Engineering investigation:** structural, mechanical, electrical, and civil engineering surveys and analysis

of the property. Architectural base drawings are usually used to evaluate and map the various building or site systems. Field tests and monitoring are usually undertaken to complete these investigations.

**Code profile:** identifies all applicable codes and regulations and describes how the codes apply to the building and site. The profile includes recommendations for life safety, access for people with disabilities, and regulatory compliance.

**Program:** determines how the property will be used in the future. The program for use should be appropriate for the significance of the property and should describe new physical requirements in substantial detail. Functional needs will have an impact on code compliance, preserving the historical integrity of the structure, and the preservation treatments that will be needed to protect the building fabric.

If the building has special significance and will be open to the public, an interpretive program will also be needed.

**Alternative treatments:** properly preserving a building or site is a design process. As in any other design process, there will be a series of choices involving future use, material repair or replacement, period of restoration, interior environment, code compliance, alteration of equipment, furnishings, and landscape concerns, to name just a few. Treatments that provide the most benefit will be described and then evaluated in terms of cost, feasibility, and impact on historical integrity.

**Cost estimates:** once there is a complete understanding of the structure's condition, and how the structure will be used and treated, estimates can be made of the probable construction cost.

**Preservation plan:** describes how the property can be stabilized, preserved, used, and interpreted by means of schematic plans, elevations, and text. The plan summarizes all of the decisions made regarding the property's treatment, along with a recommended schedule and budget for further investigation and the actual work.

**Historic Structure Report:** coordinating and assembling all of the necessary studies, as described above, into a single document constitutes a comprehensive Historic Structure Report (HSR). An HSR should be a dynamic process for decision making rather than a

fixed product. Continuing investigation and treatments will produce fresh information. Decisions and workplans may need to be reconsidered as a more complete understanding of the structure or site is achieved.

### **Design Development Phase**

**Architectural design:** develop final design drawings for the project, including site plans, floor plans, elevations, sections, and significant preservation details. Special materials and construction techniques should also be included.

**Engineering:** prepare preliminary design documents for structural, mechanical, electrical, and site development.

**Outline specifications:** prepare written outline of specifications for the work, including materials, workmanship, and the methods and techniques required.

**Statement of probable cost:** prepare estimated costs for work, based on architectural design, preliminary engineering, and outline specifications.

**Approvals:** assist in obtaining approvals from authorities having jurisdiction over the project, including public bodies such as local planning and zoning boards, historic landmark and historic district review boards, and the state historic preservation office. Review and approval of the owner is obtained before completion of each professional service phase.

### **Construction Documents Phase**

**Construction documents:** prepare the contract documents, including working drawings and specifications that set forth detailed requirements for construction of the entire project. Final engineering documents are also completed during this phase.

**Final cost estimates:** prepare updated statement of probable costs for the work.

### **Bidding, Negotiations, and Construction Contract Phase**

**Contract advice:** inform client about various contracts appropriate for preservation projects and how to select and contract with a qualified preservation contractor. Issue the contract document for bidding or negotiation and assist the client in the execution of a construction agreement, or contract.

## Construction and Contract Administration Phase

**Construction observation:** provide qualified construction observers to review construction, including the analysis of building conditions discovered during construction, field testing, and use of proper materials and techniques. Conduct the final inspection and issue certificate of completion.

**Contract administration:** review shop drawings, samples, and special work. Prepare certificates of payment and change orders for the client's approval. Upon project completion, prepare construction record drawings, preservation maintenance plan, and final report of project for the client's records.

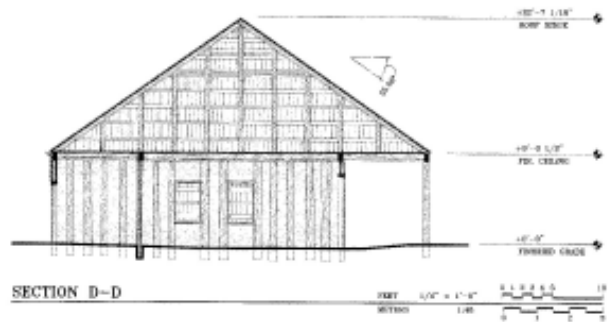
## Other Services

In addition to services for individual sites, the architect can provide other preservation services. These may include the following:

- Historic district survey: cataloging and rating of buildings and landscapes for planning purposes and landmark designation
- Design guidelines: research and preparation of guidelines for managing the future development and protection of historic towns and neighborhoods
- Expert witness: provide expert architectural opinions about a building in a public hearing or legal procedure
- Tax credit or abatement certification: historical research, restoration, or rehabilitation design, document preparation, and application to local and national authorities.

## ALTERNATIVE METHODS FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONSTRUCTION

For projects with a high degree of historical significance or where the goal is "museum quality" restoration, normal contracting procedures may not be appropriate. If it is necessary to continue the investigation and historical analysis into the construction phase, with the final scope and nature of the work remaining indeterminate, it will be important to involve the contractor in the decision-making process. In other cases, reproducing original materials and workmanship becomes a research and education project, with the added benefit of training new craftspeople and gaining new knowledge.



*The Badin-Roque House, Natchez, Louisiana. Section D-D. Drawn by Michael Tabb, 2000. Courtesy of Historic American Buildings Survey, U.S. National Park Service.*

Your architect will be able to describe alternative methods for achieving your preservation goals: construction management, in-house work crews, time-and-material subcontracts, or educational training programs that may benefit your school or community.

## THE PRESERVATION TEAM

Historic properties of major significance may require a team of specialists. In those cases, a historical architect performs the valuable role of assembling and managing the team, directing the research and investigation program, establishing a preservation plan, and implementing the work.

Depending on the type of preservation project, the following professionals may be required:

**Architect:** the team leader is a registered architect with considerable experience in the design and construction process. The architect has overall responsibility for ensuring that the project meets the legal requirements for health, safety, and welfare of the public, as well as the goals for historic preservation.

**Historical Architect:** a registered architect who is primarily concerned with the historic preservation process and who has special training in and knowledge of early building techniques. He or she is able to determine the original fabric of and later additions to a structure, interpret findings for the client, and coordinate the work of other specialists involved in preserving historic buildings.

**Architectural Historian or Historian:** a specialist with appropriate graduate degrees in history and demonstrated abilities in the field of architectural

history. The historian serves as a research consultant for the architect, often conducting the literature search and preparing the statements of significance.

**Archaeologist:** a qualified professional with a graduate degree in archaeology or anthropology, with specialized experience in research, fieldwork, and analysis of historic sites and buildings.

**Engineers:** licensed professionals with special qualifications in civil, structural, mechanical, or electrical engineering. The engineers are consultants to the architect and should be sensitive to the special requirements of preservation projects and knowledgeable about traditional materials and construction methods.

**Landscape Architect:** this specially trained professional is experienced in the design of land forms and gardens; understands modern and historic plant materials and landscape construction techniques; and assists the architect with preservation of the project environment, historic landscapes, and site.

**Architectural Conservator:** the conservator is an architect or skilled preservation technologist knowledgeable in conservation of architectural materials. Techniques of conservation require an emphasis on nondestructive investigations, and the scientific applications of knowledge of early building technologies, the causes of deterioration, and preservation treatments for historic building materials.

**Historic Interiors Specialist:** an architect or specially trained professional who is experienced in the investigation, documentation, research, and analysis of the furnishings, lighting, and decorative finishes of historic building interiors.

**Others:** additional consultants whose special knowledge, skills, and experience may be required to ensure proper execution of the project.

### **PRESERVATION BENEFITS**

The greatest benefit of historic preservation is the protection and interpretation of our cultural heritage. Buildings are a true record of the period or society that created them. They are a primary source of historical information. The historic and social value of preserving older neighborhoods, restoring a landmark county courthouse, or adaptive use of railroad stations or other underutilized buildings across the country far exceeds the direct economic benefits. Preservation

makes a significant contribution to the beauty and enjoyment of our cities, towns, and rural landscapes and to the quality of life in these special places.

At the same time, the economic benefits of preservation are not inconsequential. Solid documentation exists regarding benefits to the tax base of communities and stimulation of the economy.

Both public and private owners have come to realize the economic benefits of preservation. Savings in costs, materials, and energy in the adaptive use or preservation of existing buildings are significant. In adaptive use projects, the cost per square foot can be substantially less than that for new construction. In addition, both energy and natural resources can be saved by reusing existing structures rather than manufacturing, delivering, and constructing buildings with new materials.

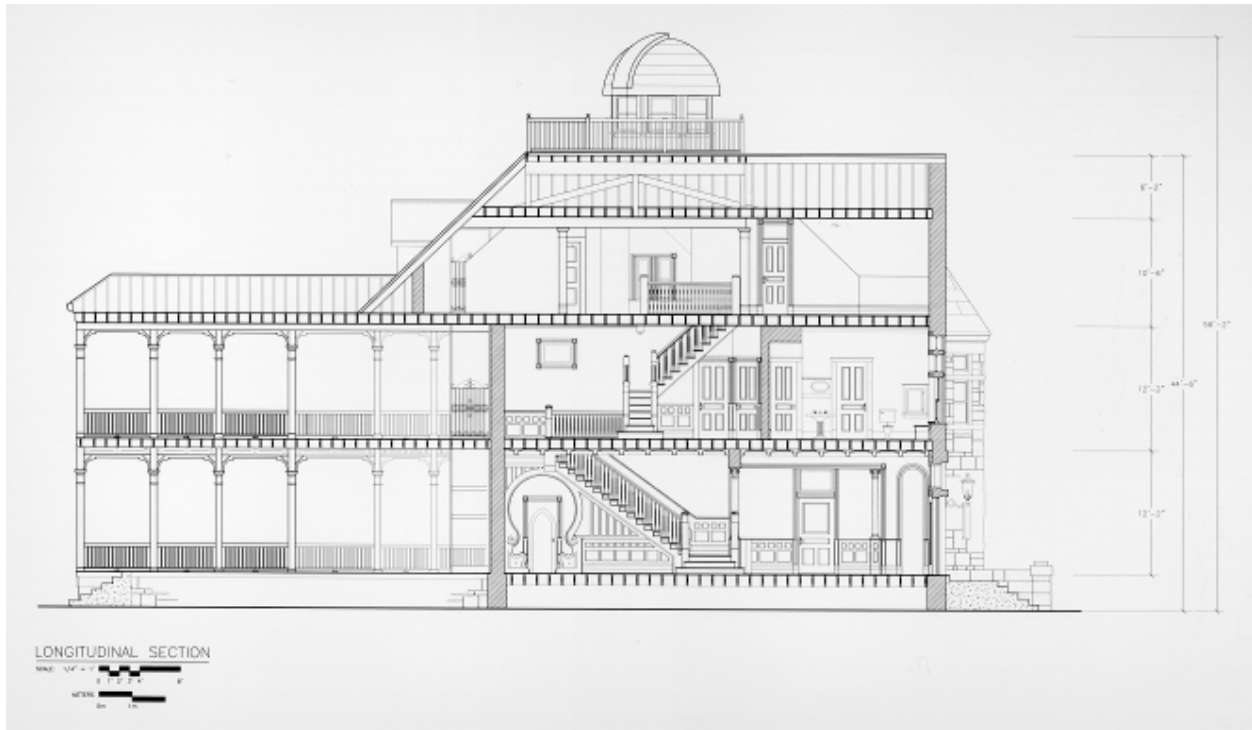
Owners of buildings that are recognized historic landmarks or are located in designated historic districts may qualify for other financial benefits. Federal tax laws and Internal Revenue Service regulations provide tax credits for the restoration of commercial buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places. State and local grants and special tax deductions may also be available.

### **PRESERVATION COSTS**

As in any architectural work, historic preservation costs vary greatly with the nature, quality, and location of a project. Restoration of a major landmark may be expensive, while construction costs for rehabilitation of an older, more typical building can be surprisingly low. Acquisition costs will vary with the location and the market.

Costs for specialists such as engineers, archaeologists, historians, material scientists, hazardous waste evaluation and abatement teams, and architectural conservators vary with the scope of the undertaking. The early involvement of specialists is essential for the cost-effective and satisfactory completion of the project.

Professional service fees for historic preservation projects will depend on the services the client requires. As with other professional services, the fee will be based on the time involved and the experience, knowledge, and skill needed to meet project requirements. For historic preservation work, fees are usually computed on an hourly basis; but they can be



*Maverick-Carter House, San Antonio, Texas. Longitudinal Section. Drawn by Kelly Young, Lisa E. Dunnne, Lisa M. LeJune and Linda S. Manning, 1999. Courtesy of Historic American Buildings Survey, U.S. National Park Service.*

negotiated as fixed sums or as a percentage of construction costs when the nature and scope of work can be clearly determined.

### **SELECTION OF AN ARCHITECT**

The selection of an architect for your historic preservation project involves a process not unlike the selection of any other professional. Seeking referrals from previous clients and visiting completed projects are good ways to start the selection process.

It is important to identify architects with a demonstrated ability to work with historic buildings. In most locations, several qualified architects may be available. A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) is often the first step. The RFQ should request information about the architect's education, special qualifications in the area of historic preservation, and experience with similar projects. Information about the architect's office, technical staff, facilities, and special capabilities will be helpful in identifying the right firm.

From the RFQ response, a short-list can then be prepared and interviews arranged. Interviews offer the opportunity to discuss in detail the scope of the project and the architect's response. Some clients conduct interviews in the architect's office to gain more familiarity with the architect's work methods and staff—and to gauge their confidence level in working with the architectural group. A well-qualified architect will appreciate the care with which you undertake the selection process.

The American Institute of Architects has publications available on selecting and working with an architect, a directory of AIA members, and a bibliography of publications on historic preservation. Further information on selecting an architect is available from the State Historic Preservation Offices, the National Park Service, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Association for Preservation Technology International publishes a directory of its members and their activities in preservation. Address inquiries to:



**The American Institute of Architects  
Historic Resources Committee**

1735 New York Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20006-5292  
Phone: 202-626-7300  
Fax: 202-626-7425  
Web: [www.aia.org](http://www.aia.org)

**The National Center for Cultural Resources,  
Stewardship, and Partnership**

National Park Service  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240  
Phone: 202-343-3327  
Fax: 202-343-5260  
Web: [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)

**National Trust for Historic Preservation**

1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone: 800-944-6847  
Fax: 202-588-6038  
Web: [www.nthp.org](http://www.nthp.org)

**Association for Preservation Technology  
International**

4513 Lincoln Ave.  
Williamsburg, VA 23187-3511  
Phone: 630-241-3100  
Fax: 630-241-0142  
Web: [www.apti.org](http://www.apti.org)

**National Conference of State Historic  
Preservation Officers**

Suite 342, Hall of States  
444 North Capitol Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-1512  
Phone: 202-624-5465  
Fax: 202-624-5419  
Web: [www.sso.org/ncshpo](http://www.sso.org/ncshpo)

**H**istoric preservation has been an important concern of The American Institute of Architects for many years. In fact, the AIA Historic Resources Committee, founded in 1890, is the oldest national historic preservation organization in the United States. Throughout its history, the AIA has advocated preservation of important historic sites and significant examples of American architecture, landscape, and city planning. The committee meets at various locations across the country, collects and disseminates new information in the preservation field, and maintains a liaison with other national preservation groups.

The AIA Historic Resources Committee has often presented testimony to Congress on critical preservation issues and directs its efforts toward improving the understanding and knowledge of historic buildings and districts, and raising the quality of professional services throughout the country.