

CHAPTER 4

PRESERVATION PRINCIPLES



This chapter presents basic design principles for historic preservation that form the foundation for the design policies and guidelines for rehabilitation that follow.

Basic Preservation Theory

In basic historic preservation theory, three concepts are particularly important to understand: historic “significance,” the time “period” that defines it and the physical “integrity” of a property.

The Concept of Significance

A building possessing architectural significance is one that represents the work of a noteworthy architect or builder, possesses high artistic value or that well represents a type, period or method of construction. An historically significant property is one associated with significant persons, or with significant events or historical trends or is a property already determined to be contributing to the significance of a recognized Character Area.

The Period of Significance

Downtown Truckee has a *period of significance*, which is the time period during which the area gained its architectural and historical importance. It is generally recognized that a certain amount of time should pass before the historical significance of a property can be evaluated. The National Register of Historic Places, for example, generally requires that a property be at least 50 years old or have extraordinary importance before it may be considered for listing.

Although individual historic neighborhoods may have a different period of significance, the downtown as a whole has a period of significance that spans approximately 87 years (1863-1950).

The Concept of Integrity

In addition to being from an historical period, an historic property also should retain sufficient “integrity”; that is, a high percentage of the structure should date from the period of significance. The majority of a building’s structural system and materials should be original, as should the majority of its character-defining features.

Special Circumstances

Some historic properties may be individually significant and not represent the community’s period of significance. For example, individual historic resources that are significant in their own right may have been moved into Truckee. These structures should also be preserved.

Preservation Principles

The following preservation principles apply to all historic properties in Truckee’s Historic Preservation Overlay District.

Respect the historic design character of a building.

Don’t try to change its style or make it look older, newer or more ornate than it really was. Confusing the character by mixing elements of different styles is also an example of disrespect.

Seek uses that are compatible with the historic character of a building.

Building uses that are closely related to the original use are preferred. Every reasonable effort should be made to provide a compatible use for the building that will require minimal alteration to the building and its site. An example of an appropriate adaptive use is con-



A historic building must retain sufficient integrity of its form, details and materials, as well as its overall character.

verting a residence into a bed and breakfast establishment. This can be accomplished without radical alteration of the original architecture.

When a substantial change in function is necessary to keep a building in active service, then a use that requires the least alteration to significant exterior elements is preferred. It may be that, in order to adapt a building to the proposed new use, such a radical alteration to significant elements would be required that the entire concept is inappropriate. Experience has shown, however, that in most cases designs can be developed that both respect the historic integrity of the building and accommodate new functions.

Early alterations, additions or construction more than 50 years old may have become historically significant and thus merit preservation.

Many additions or alterations to buildings that have taken place in the course of time are themselves evidence of the history of a building and its neighborhood and therefore may merit preservation.

More recent alterations, additions or new construction that are not historically significant may be removed.

For example, stucco may presently obscure original wood. In this case, removal of this alteration, and restoration of the original material is strongly encour-

aged. In general, most alterations less than fifty years old lack historic significance.

Preservation Terminology

Preservation projects may include maintenance of existing historic elements, repairs to deteriorated ones, the replacement of missing features and construction of new additions. The following terms shall apply in addition to the basic definitions set forth in Chapter 1.

1. **Demolition.** To tear down or destroy a building or a building element. In a total demolition, the entire structure is removed from the site, including original materials. In other cases, a partial demolition may occur. A rear wall may be removed, for example to construct an addition. If a partial demolition is extensive, it can result in such a substantial loss of integrity that the building may no longer retain historic significance.
2. **Maintenance.** Some work focuses on keeping the property in good working condition by repairing features as soon as deterioration becomes apparent, using procedures that retain the original character and finish of the features. In some cases, preventive maintenance is executed prior to noticeable deterioration. No alteration or reconstruction is involved. Such work is considered "maintenance."

3. **Preservation.** The act or process of applying measures to sustain the existing form, integrity and material of a building or structure, as well as the existing form and vegetative cover of a site is defined as “preservation.” It may include initial stabilization work, where necessary, as well as ongoing maintenance of historic building materials. Essentially, the property is kept in good condition.
4. **Reconstruction.** To recreate, out of new materials, a replica of an original feature of a building. This technique is often used to replace ornamentation that may have been removed. When applied selectively in an overall rehabilitation project, reconstruction of missing elements can enhance the historic appearance. In some rare cases, an entire building is reconstructed to match the original appearance. Such a structure would be compatible with its historic context, but would not be rated as having historic significance.
5. **Rehabilitation.** “Rehabilitation” is the process of returning a property to a state that makes a contemporary use possible while still preserving those portions or features of the property which are significant to its historical, architectural and cultural values. Rehabilitation may include the adaptive use of the building and additions may also occur.
6. **Remodeling.** To remake or to make over the design image of a building is to “remodel” it. The appearance is changed by removing original details and by adding new features that are out of character with the original. Remodeling is inappropriate for historic buildings.
7. **Renovation.** To “renovate” means to improve by repair, to revive. In renovation, the usefulness and appearance of the building is enhanced. The basic character and significant details are respected and preserved, but some sympathetic alterations may also occur. Alterations should be reversible, such that future owners may restore the building to its original design, should they wish to do so.
8. **Restoration.** To “restore,” one reproduces the appearance of a building exactly as it looked at a particular moment in time; to reproduce a pure style—either interior or exterior. This process may include the removal of later work or the replacement of missing historic features.

Planning a Preservation Project

The following preservation principles apply to historic properties in Truckee and form the basis of the guidelines that follow.

1. If a feature is intact and in good condition, maintain it as such.
2. If the feature is deteriorated or damaged, repair it to its original condition.
3. If it is not feasible to repair the feature, then replace it with one that is the same or similar in character (materials, detail, finish) to the original one. Replace only that portion that is beyond repair.
4. If the feature is missing entirely, reconstruct it from appropriate evidence.
5. If a new feature or addition is necessary, design it in such a way as to minimize the impact on original features.

In essence, the least level of intervention is preferred. By following this tenet, the highest degree of integrity will be maintained for the property.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings

The design guidelines in this document incorporate principles set forth in *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*—a widely accepted set of basic preservation design principles. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards are general rehabilitation guidelines established by the National Park Service. These standards apply in Truckee in addition to the guidelines set forth in this document. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards are a part of these Historic Design Guidelines and will be applied in the same manner as other guidelines, including the provision for flexibility as described in the "Definitions of Key Terms" in Chapter 1. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards will apply to buildings and resources designated as Category A and B in the Historic Resources and Architectural Inventory and to buildings and resources designated as Category C when rehabilitative work is proposed to reclassify the building or resource to Category A or B.

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.

Alterations and additions to existing properties should not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural material. Such design should be compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property, neighborhood and environment.