



# DESIGN GUIDELINES

## Adopted 2022

Heritage Preservation Program



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## Purpose

This document is intended to *provide guidance* to property owners and the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) in determining appropriate treatment to designated historic properties in the City of Rochester. Designated properties are those that have been determined to be historically or architecturally significant to the community and therefore warrant careful consideration when alterations are made to them. Section 4-7 of City Code, the Heritage Preservation Ordinance (HP Ordinance), establishes the program of identifying, designating and preserving historic properties in the City. It was adopted to help achieve the City mission.

**City of Rochester Mission Statement:** The mission of the City of Rochester is to provide a safe, attractive environment through the responsive, efficient, and cost-effective delivery of municipal services. The City will strive to enhance community pride by improving the physical, environmental, economic, cultural, and social quality of the community.

The HPC and Community Development Department are charged with a responsibility of facilitating the preservation of the city's heritage. To do this, with a reasonable balance between private property interests and the public interest, the review of alterations to designated properties will be considered through the lens of the city foundational principals.

### **Rochester Foundational Principals:**

- Environmental Stewardship
- Fiscal Responsibility & Sustainability
- Public Safety
- Social Equity
- Compassion

This process is not intended to place arduous restrictions on property owners. Instead, it is an opportunity for owners and the HPC to better determine appropriate treatment for these properties.

## Applying these guidelines

The first step in understanding how to apply these guidelines, is to understand why the property was designated as historically significant.

### Understanding your property

- *What makes the property historically significant?*

There are 8 criteria under which properties in Rochester may be designated (See p.3). Several of the criteria are related to the physical design and appearance of the property; others are more focused on the historic events or people associated with it. Some properties may be deemed significant for more than one of the criteria, but only one is needed for designation. Designation information, available from the Community Development Department, provides this information.

- *What are the character defining features?*

Properties derive their character from their physical features. Character-defining feature means **the distinguishing features of a building, structure, object, site or district**, which were present during the period of significance and which help convey its historical significance.

Character defining features include: architectural details, building form, and the spatial relationships between individual features.

Determining the period of significance and what remains in place from that time will help to define the character defining features and historic integrity.

Even though buildings may be of historic, rather than architectural significance, it is their tangible elements that embody the significance for association with that history.

#### Identifying Character-Defining Features in Individual Buildings

Character-defining features may be illustrated in surveys, historic guidebooks and commission design review guidelines. These documents help property owners identify those elements that should be respected when making improvements. Typical storefront components are shown below.

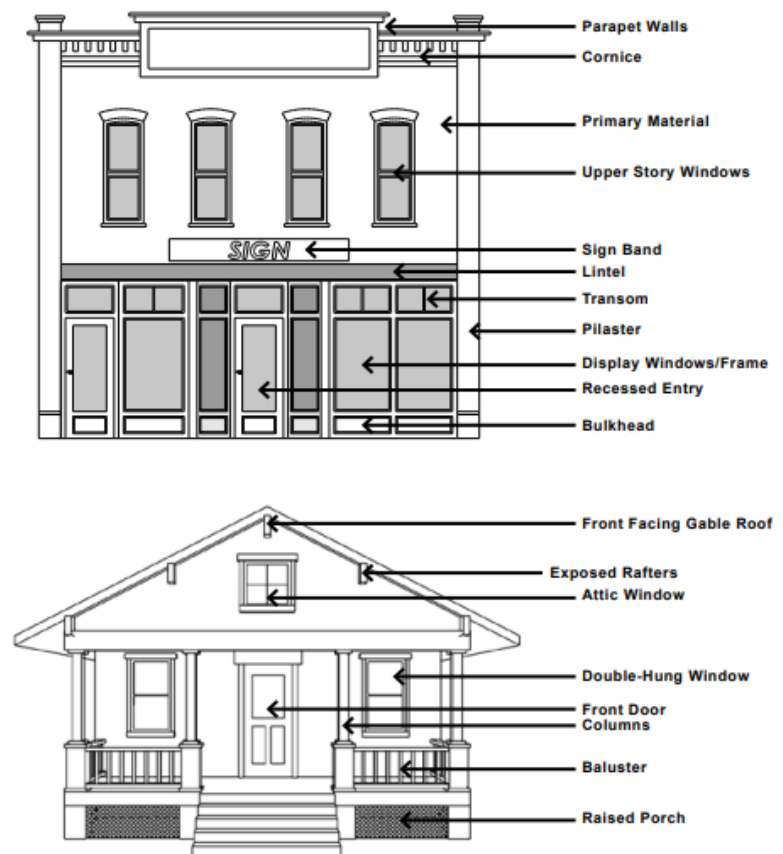


Image Source: MN HPC Training Manual (2016), p.67.

- *What is the period of significance?*  
This is the length of time when a property was associated with the events, people, or activities of its historic significance or when it attained the characteristics of that significance. The following lists the 8 criteria for which local designation is given along with the typical period of significance associated with each:

Criteria of Significance

Period of Significance (typically)

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|--|--|
| 1. Its character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the city, state or United States;  | The time frame or era of history for which it is significant.                              |
| 2. Its location as a place of a significant historic event;  | The date(s) of the significant event.  |
| 3. Its location within and contribution as an element of a landmark district or possible future district;  | The same period of significance as the historic district it is associated with.            |
| 4. Its identification with a person who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the city;  | The period of time the person was associated with the property.                            |
| 5. Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, period, form, or treatment;   | The date(s) of construction or development.  |
| 6. Its identification as the work of an architect or master builder whose individual efforts have influenced the development of the city or have contributed to the development of a nationally or internationally recognized style or movement; | The period of time the individual was working and making their contribution.               |
| 7. Its embodiment of elements of architectural design, detail, material, or craftsmanship that represent a significant architectural innovation;   | The date(s) of construction or development.  |
| 8. Its location, scale, or other physical characteristics representing an established and familiar visual feature for a neighborhood, a district, the community, or the city.  | The period of time for which it is noticed and recognized as a significant visual feature. |

- *What is historic integrity?*

A property has historic integrity when a sufficient percentage of the significant features remain as they were during its period of significance. These features allow a building to be recognized as a product of its own time. These key features allow for the property to be recognized for its period of significance. Any project being done at a designated property must maintain its overall historic integrity.



Image Source: MN HPC Training Manual (2016), p.48.

- *How is historic integrity maintained?*

The standards adopted by the City, called the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, allow for changes to designated properties. Those changes, however, need to take into account the need to preserve the historic integrity of the property. Appropriate treatment (how the property is treated during a project which alters it) is determined based on: type of significance (which criteria applies), original design, previous changes to the property, and ongoing functional needs.

### **Determining appropriate Treatment**

- *What is the project intended to accomplish?*

Defining the purpose of the project that will alter the property, will help to identify and review alternative project options. A project should be devised so that *the property's character defining features are not radically changed, obscured, damaged or destroyed.*

- *Changing or updating the use of a building*

Adaptive reuse of a building, changing it to allow for a totally different use than what it was originally designed for (e.g., turning an old factory into new apartments) is allowed under the Standards. This not only preserves community history, it is also a sustainable alternative to demolition and new construction. Many buildings can be adapted for new use or changing lifestyle, without seriously damaging their historic character. The Standards for rehabilitation (see p. 7) will apply to this type of activity.

- *Addition or new construction*

It is understood more space is sometimes needed in order to continue to use a property or additions are needed to provide space for new needs (an elevator for

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an older apartment building, for example). Entire new buildings are often needed within designated districts. Creating something new that is both compatible in design with, but also differentiated from the older building, is an important consideration for new construction that also meets the Standards.

- *Maintenance/Repair*

Repair instead of replacement is encouraged on designated properties, when possible. Sometimes contractors and owners assume that a repair is impossible or too difficult. Determination of character defining features and discussion with contractors about repairing these is a good first step in finding methods to meet the Standards.

- *Weatherizing*

The City of Rochester encourages maintenance of property to efficiently use energy for sustainable, environmental, and fiscal reasons. While it is true that technological advances have improved energy efficiencies, many historic buildings employ methods of controlling weather fluctuations with older technology that can be kept and improved upon. Pairing historic windows with appropriate storm windows, adding new insulation, and repairing/repainting masonry are all examples of work that improves energy efficiency in a sustainable manner while also maintaining historic integrity.

- *Code compliance*

Improving accessibility and meeting other safety and building code requirements is very important to maintain ongoing and equitable use of the property. Changes to meet code should be considered with the least impact to character defining features.

### **Secretary of the Interior's Standards**

The City has adopted the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties ("The Standards"). These are a series of concepts about maintaining, repairing, and replacing historic materials, as well as designing new additions or making alterations. *The Standards offer four distinct approaches to the treatment of historic properties:*

- **Preservation** focuses on the maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of a property's form as it has evolved over time.
- **Rehabilitation** acknowledges the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the property's historic character.
- **Restoration** depicts a property at a particular period of time in its history, while removing evidence of other periods.
- **Reconstruction** re-creates vanished or non-surviving portions of a property for interpretive purposes.

The treatment method chosen depends on a variety of factors, including the property's **historical significance, physical condition, and proposed use**. These, as

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well as the **extent of historic documentation** on the property are all factors in determining the appropriate treatment.

- **Historical Significance**  
Is the building nationally significant? Is it a rare survivor or the work of a master architect or craftsman? National Historic Landmarks, designated for their "exceptional significance in American history," often warrant Preservation or Restoration. By contrast, buildings that are part of a historic district listed in the National Register of Historic Places, are more typically are treated with Rehabilitation to allow for updated or compatible new uses.



Mayo Clinic's Plummer Building is a *National Historic Landmark*. Photo source: DMC

- **Physical condition**  
What is the existing condition, or degree of material integrity, of the building prior to work? Has the original form survived largely intact or has it been altered over time? Are the alterations an important part of the building's history? Preservation may be appropriate if distinctive materials, features, and spaces are essentially intact and convey the building's historical significance. If the building requires more extensive repair and replacement, or if alterations or additions are necessary for a new use, then Rehabilitation is probably the most appropriate treatment.

- **Proposed Use**



Many historic buildings can be adapted for new uses without seriously damaging their historic character, and most properties designated locally as landmarks are being used for ongoing businesses, residences, or institutional functions. Rehabilitation as a treatment is typically used for these properties. For those that are intended to convey their historic significance, such as a historic house museum, restoration or reconstruction may be more appropriate.

The Whiting House is operated as a Victorian era house museum. Photo source: <https://www.heritagehousevictorianmuseum.com/>

***Rehabilitation* is the approach most often used for locally designated landmarks and properties contributing to historic districts.**

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## Rehabilitation as a treatment approach

When repair and replacement of deteriorated features are necessary; when alterations or additions to the property are planned for a new or continued use; and when its depiction at a particular period of time is not appropriate, Rehabilitation may be considered as a treatment.

### The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

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

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation, Restoration and Reconstruction, are available at <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/four-treatments.htm> and from the Rochester Community Development Department.



- The Standards for Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration or Reconstruction, as appropriate for each proposed project, are adopted by reference in City Code 4-7. They are utilized in the review and determination of approval for Certificates of Appropriateness (COA).
- The Standards are applied taking into consideration the economic and technical feasibility of each project.
- The Secretary of the Interior also publishes many resources, including Preservation Briefs and *Guidelines* for the Treatment of Historic Properties, which are not adopted outright, but are utilized by the City to assist in applying the Standards. The *Guidelines*:
  - Provide an aid to assist in understanding and applying the Standards to all types of historic buildings;
  - Are not meant to give specific requirements or address exceptions or unusual conditions;
  - Offer general design and technical recommendations to specific property features and property types;
  - Illustrate the practical application of the treatment standards to historic properties;
  - Are written to apply to contexts throughout the nation; they are broad in nature and require careful interpretation.

**Together, the Standards and Guidelines provide a framework of guidance for decision-making about work on or changes proposed to a historic property.**

REHABILITATION

WOOD: CLAPBOARD, WEATHERBOARD, SHINGLES, AND OTHER FUNCTIONAL AND DECORATIVE ELEMENTS


RECOMMENDED	NOT RECOMMENDED
Applying chemical preservatives or paint to wood features that are subject to weathering, such as exposed beam ends, outriggers, or rafter tails.	Using chemical preservatives (such as creosote) which, unless they were used historically, can change the appearance of wood features.
Implementing an integrated pest management plan to identify appropriate preventive measures to guard against insect damage, such as installing termite guards, fumigating, and treating with chemicals.	
Retaining coatings (such as paint) that protect the wood from moisture and ultraviolet light. Paint removal should be considered only when there is paint surface deterioration and as part of an overall maintenance program which involves repainting or applying other appropriate coatings.	Stripping paint or other coatings from wood features without recoating.

The label indicates the feature for which the guideline applies.

Guidelines are provided for all 4 of the treatment approaches in different sections.

Guidelines are provided for both recommended and not recommended actions.

Guidelines organized in sub-categories by material or feature.



[8] Rotted clapboards have been replaced selectively with new wood siding to match the originals.

WOOD 89

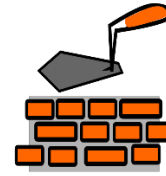
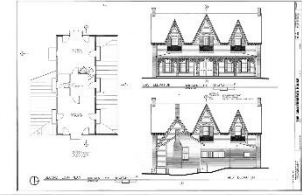
Guidelines that help to explain how the Standards apply to different settings and types of projects can be found at:  
<https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/treatment-guidelines-2017.pdf>

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## Achieving Approval

Preapproval is required prior to issuance of the following for any designated property or for one within a designated historic district:

### *Required When:*



- The proposed alteration requires building or demolition permits; *or*
- The proposed development requires a land use application;<sup>1</sup> *and*
- The proposed project will alter the appearance of the property when viewed from off site.

### *Exceptions to this requirement are when:*

1. Interior remodeling/alterations are done that do not impact the exterior appearance of the property;
2. Repainting, re-plastering or similar exterior refinishing of existing surfaces. This includes changes of color to the exterior. (Covering existing exterior surfaces with new material, such as siding over wood or stucco over brick is not exempt);
3. Routine repair or maintenance, such as caulking, replacement of fasteners and re-glazing windows.

## **Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)**

An applicant needing preapproval of proposed project must receive a Certificate of Appropriateness from the City before any permit or land use approval is issued.

- An application for a Certificate of Appropriateness may be requested prior to the submission of the building permit/land use application.
- If a permit/land use application is submitted and no Certificate of Appropriateness has been issued, the submission will trigger a review for Certificate of Appropriateness.
- Projects that require more than one building permit may be requested under one Certificate of Appropriateness.
- Certificates of Appropriateness are typically valid for one year from issuance. An application may request and the City may extend this period when specified within the approval. The applicant may request an extension after the issuance and prior to the one year period.

## **Application requirements & tips**

An application for Certificate of Appropriateness shall be filed with the City and must provide sufficient information to review the proposed project. Consultation with the

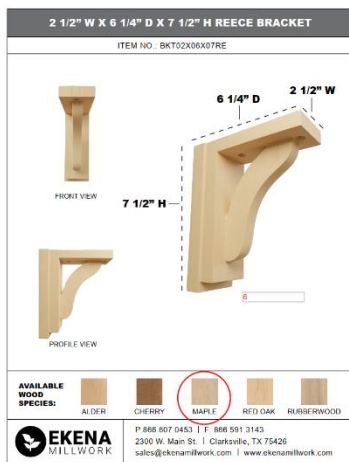
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<sup>1</sup> Including but not limited to: Site Development Plans, Conditional Use Permits, or Subdivisions

Heritage Preservation & Urban Design Coordinator is recommended to determine required submittal materials, including:

- Completed forms and fees (if any established).
- Maps, site plans and/or photos showing existing property and locations of the proposed alterations, additions, or demolition.
- Description of the proposed work including proposed product information, extent, and timing for work proposed.
- Sketches, architectural renderings, plans, sections, elevations or similar illustrations with existing and proposed dimensions, showing the property appearance after proposed alterations.

Along with the application form, the submittal for Certificate of Appropriateness should include information that will convey how the proposed project meets the Standards. Examples of this include diagrams, plans, photos and product information sheet.



- Not to scale
- Lacks sufficient detail

### UNACCEPTABLE DRAWING



### ACCEPTABLE DRAWING



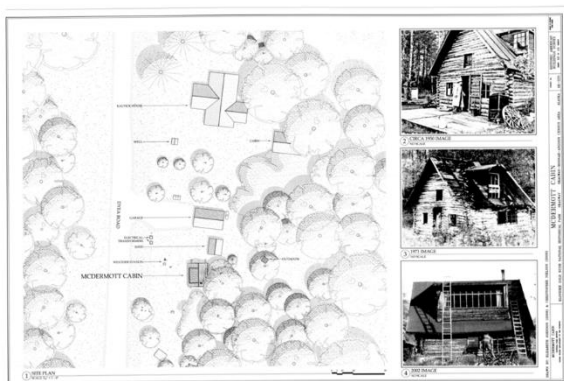
- Free-hand, but to scale
- Measurements provided
- Sufficient detail

### ACCEPTABLE DRAWING



- Mechanically drafted
- Measurements provided
- Sufficient detail

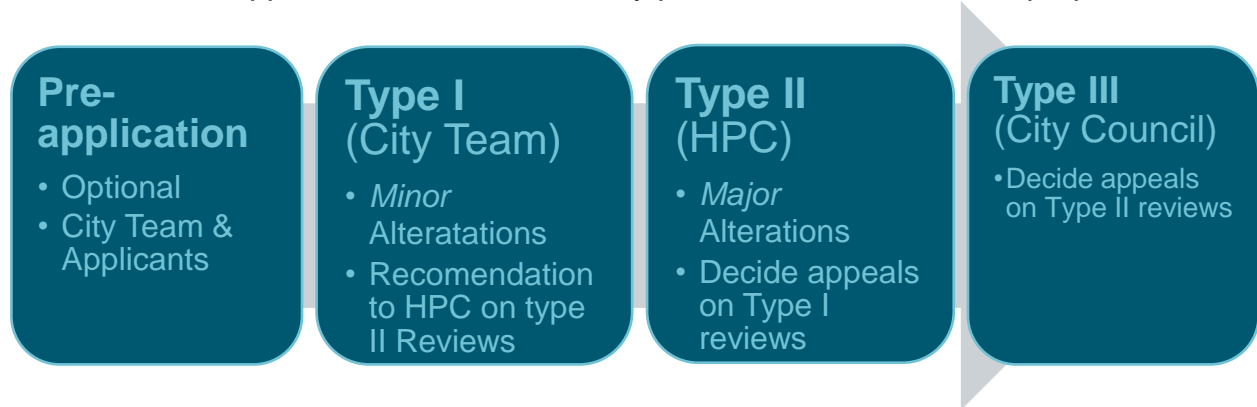
Image Source: MN HPC Training Manual (2016)



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## Review Process

Proposed major projects and alterations must receive a Certificate of Appropriateness from the HPC, while minor projects are approved by City personnel. HPC reviews do not require a public hearing (with notification) but are reviewed at a public meeting where both the applicant and attendants may provide comments on the proposal.



- **Minor Alterations** are done with a type I review. Decisions are made by City personnel and may be appealed to the HPC by the applicant. They include review of:
  - Signs.
  - Replacement of features that are not character defining.
  - Alterations not visible from public land or the right of way.
  - Alterations to non-contributing properties in any historic district.
- **Major Alterations** are done by a type II review. Decisions are made by the HPC and may be appealed to the City Council by the applicant. They include review of:
  - Additions and alterations that are visible from public property or the right of way, unless otherwise defined as minor.
  - New buildings or site development in designated landmark districts.

### Approval time frame:

- Type II reviews are considered at public HPC meetings which are typically held monthly. Application materials must be submitted with enough advance notice to allow for review and analysis by City personnel, typically at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting.
- Time for review and decisions will vary depending on the project, number of other submittals under review at the time, and when the submittal was received in relationship to the next scheduled meeting. Decisions on applications are typically made within 2 to 6 weeks of submittal of a complete application.

## Seeking Additional Assistance

Applications for a Certificate of Appropriateness do not strictly require submittals to be created by a design professional. However, depending on the project proposed, architects, engineers, contractors or other professionals may have the best ability to convey information so that reviews can be conducted in a timely and efficient manner.

Following are some of the professions that may be helpful in preparing an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness:

- Architects – are professional designers that have the ability to create diagrams, plans and drawings to scale, that show features of buildings and other structures.
  - Historic Architects are those who practice architecture and also meet qualifications of the federal government for work on of historic preservation projects.



- Building contractors – some professional contractors have the ability to create technical drawings to scale which can be submitted as part of an application packet. Expertise and specialization of contractors varies and property owners should discuss with their contractors their understanding and knowledge of historic building design.
- DIY – property owners that choose to pursue projects themselves may have the ability to create their own plans and illustrations or may seek a professional draftsman to help convey their proposal.

**32 PRESERVATION BRIEFS**  
Making Historic Properties Accessible  
Thomas C. Jester and Sharon C. Park, AIA

U.S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
Cultural Resources  
Heritage Preservation Services

Historically, most buildings and landscapes were not designed to be readily accessible for people with disabilities. In recent years, however, emphasis has been placed on preserving historically significant properties, and on making these properties—and the activities within them—more accessible to people with disabilities. With the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, access to properties open to the public is now a civil right.

This Preservation Brief introduces the complex issue of providing accessibility at historic properties, and underscores the need to balance accessibility and historic preservation. It provides guidance on making historic properties accessible while preserving their historic character; the Brief also provides examples to show that independent physical accessibility at historic properties can be achieved with careful planning, consultation, and sensitive design. While the Brief focuses primarily on making buildings and their sites accessible, it also includes a section on historic landscapes. The Brief will assist historic property owners, design professionals, and administrators in evaluating their historic properties so that the highest level of accessibility can be provided while minimizing changes to historic materials and features. Because many projects encompassing accessibility work are complex, it is advisable to consult with experts in the fields of historic preservation and accessibility before proceeding with permanent physical changes to historic properties.

Modifications to historic properties to increase accessibility may be as simple as a small, inexpensive ramp to overcome one entrance step, or may involve changes to exterior and interior features. The Brief does not provide a detailed explanation of local or State accessibility laws as they vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. A concise explanation of several federal accessibility laws is included on page 13.

**Planning Accessibility Modifications**

Historic properties are distinguished by features, materials, spaces, and spatial relationships that contribute to their historic character. Often these elements, such as steep terrain, monumental steps, narrow or heavy doors, decorative ornamental hardware, and narrow pathways and corridors, pose barriers to persons with disabilities, particularly to wheelchair users (See Figure 1).

A three-step approach is recommended to identify and implement accessibility modifications that will protect the integrity and historic character of historic properties:

- 1) Review the historical significance of the property and identify character-defining features;
- 2) Assess the property's existing and required level of accessibility; and
- 3) Evaluate accessibility options within a preservation context.

**1) Review the Historical Significance of the Property**

If the property has been designated as historic (properties that are listed in, or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or designated under State or local law), the property's nomination file should be reviewed to learn about its significance. Local preservation commissions and State Historic Preservation Offices can usually provide





Figure 1. It is important to identify the materials, features, and spaces that should be preserved when planning accessibility modifications. These may include stairs, railings, doors, and door surrounds. Photo: National Park Service files.

The U.S. Secretary of the Interior provides a variety of resources to help both professionals and property owners understand methods and design principals for work on historic properties. “Preservation Briefs” and “Preservation Tech Notes” are on-line sources that may be helpful. These can be found at:

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve.htm>

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## Foundations of the Rochester Heritage Preservation Program

### Rochester Heritage Preservation Ordinance

- Chapter 4-7 of City Code.
- Establishes the HPC, designation process and criteria and requirements for alterations to designated historic properties.
- Provides definitions of terminology used in heritage preservation programs.

### Minnesota State Statute

- 471.193 Municipal Heritage Preservation.
- Provides for Minnesota municipalities to establish heritage preservation programs, including property designation and enactment of rules for property alteration.

### U.S. Federal Preservation Law

- 1966 National Historic Preservation Act.
- Authorized the Secretary of the Interior to establish professional standards for the preservation of historic properties.

## Document Sources

Images, concepts and quotes in this document can be found from the following sources:

Minnesota State Preservation Office training curriculum:

[00\\_Minnesota\\_StatewideTrainingProgram\\_Manual\\_BOOK\\_Final\\_web\(1\)\\_tcm36-371994.pdf \(mn.gov\)](https://www.mn.gov/00_Minnesota_StatewideTrainingProgram_Manual_BOOK_Final_web(1)_tcm36-371994.pdf)

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties:

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm>