



Interpreting The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

Subject: Designing New Additions to Provide Accessibility

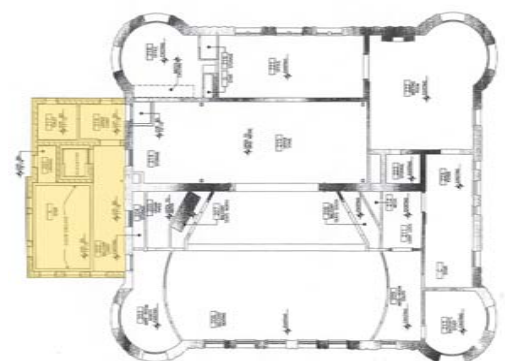
Applicable Standards:

2. Retention of Historic Character
5. Preservation of Distinctive Features, Finishes, and Craftsmanship
9. Compatible New Additions/Alterations
10. Reversibility of New Additions

Issue: In the course of a rehabilitation project, it may be necessary to make a building accessible and to provide additional means of egress. Historic buildings are sometimes inaccessible to those with special needs and were often built with fewer exits than required by modern codes. In most cases, these requirements can be met within the historic building. If they cannot, or if inserting a ramp, stair, or elevator would destroy important historic interior fabric, then an addition may be considered for the exterior of the building. New additions must be compatible with the historic building to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

The new addition should be placed on a secondary façade and be minimally visible from the public right of way. The Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings recommend locating new additions so that they do not obscure, damage, or destroy character-defining features of a historic building. Further guidance on new additions advises that the design should be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features of the historic building. The addition should remain secondary to the historic building and should not detract from it. It must be recognizable as a new addition and must not attempt to copy the historic building. Additions should be compatible, yet differentiated from historic buildings.

Application 1 (Compatible treatment): This Richardsonian Romanesque-style theater, built in 1890, underwent rehabilitation for continued use as a theater. Due to the highly ornate interior, it was not possible to accommodate the code-required elevator and stairway within the building. Thus, the rehabilitation included an addition on the rear to house a stair tower and elevator for accessibility. The addition was faced in the same ashlar-cut sandstone as the historic building. Several design techniques were employed to differentiate the addition from the historic building, including window and door openings that are simplified versions of those on the historic building. On the interior of the new addition, the former exterior masonry wall remains exposed and original window and door openings have been retained. Because the building is situated on a corner with two street elevations, the rear addition is visible, yet compatible with the historic theater. This rear addition meets the Standards while successfully meeting accessibility requirements.



*Top: Main façade of historic theater after rehabilitation.
Middle: Historic theater building with new rear accessible entrance.
Bottom: Plan of theater building showing new addition highlighted in yellow.*

Application 2 (Compatible treatment): Built in 1922, this school building was rehabilitated for office use. Due to interior level changes and the absence of an elevator, an accessible entry was required. A small grade-level entrance was added to the rear of the building. The one-story addition relates to the historic building through its use of brick and limestone detailing. The addition is clearly differentiated through its use of modern window and door openings. By placing the addition on the rear, the symmetrical main façade remains unchanged. The new entrance leads to a newly configured lobby with access to a new elevator. The new rear addition is compatible with the historic building and meets the Standards.



Top: Rear façade of school prior to rehabilitation.

Middle: Rear façade after rehabilitation. New accessible entrance is located on the far right.

Bottom: New accessible entrance. The same brick and limestone were used for the addition, while contemporary-styled windows and doors help to differentiate the new construction.

