



Interpreting The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

Subject: Completing Never-Built Portions of a Historic Building

Applicable Standards:

2. Retention of Historic Character
3. Recognition of Historic Period
9. Compatible New Additions/Alterations

Issue: Buildings are seldom built exactly as they are originally conceived. In many cases, entire wings or portions of a building are omitted or not completed as initially proposed because of budgetary constraints or programmatic changes. However, it is important to remember that a building's historic character is determined by its appearance and configuration as it has evolved over time and as it has existed throughout the greater part of its history. Therefore, in most cases, constructing never-built portions or features of a historic building as part of a rehabilitation project may so significantly alter the building's historic character that the rehabilitation project will not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, even when these portions or features were part of the building's original design.



Application 1 (*Incompatible treatment*): A nine-story commercial office structure built in 1910-11 was to be rehabilitated for continued office use. Located on a highly-visible corner, the building features a U-shaped plan, distinctive storefronts, elegant brick and terra-cotta detailing and an elaborate projecting cornice and parapet. The rehabilitation of this building included the construction of two additional floors that were included in the original architect's design for the building but were never built.

Extensive research into the history of the building clearly showed that the architect's original design envisioned an eleven-story building rather than the nine-story structure that was eventually built. This was documented in the historic structural drawings, original promotional material, and in the structural support for the future addition found on the roof. Such documentation, however interesting, was of little relevance since the historic character of the building was defined by what had actually been constructed, that is, a nine-story structure with a very distinctive cornice. Accordingly, constructing the proposed two-story rooftop addition, even though it followed the never-built design, was not a compatible treatment because it changed the height and proportions of the building, diminished the prominence of the cornice and, thus, negatively impacted the building's historic character. The project did not meet the Standards.

Above is an elevation of the original design concept; the shaded areas indicate the two stories which were never built. To the right is the building as originally constructed, and to the far right, the building after the two-story addition was built.





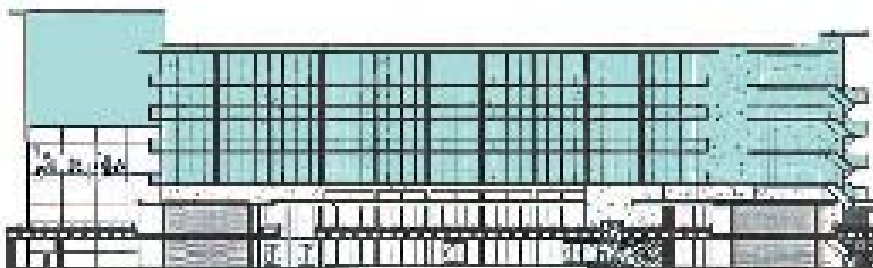
The image at the top is an architectural rendering of the original design for the hotel from 1957, which includes a tower element. Below this image is a postcard showing the main entrance to the complex as completed in the 1950's. As can be evidenced in these illustrations, the proportions of the three-story tower pylon highlighted by the long horizontal lines of the surrounding construction are part of the complex's distinctive visual character. The third image from the top shows the tower and porte-cochere before rehabilitation. While the tower's original architectural finish concrete has been covered with stucco and the original sign has been removed and replaced, its primary form remains as it was originally constructed.



Application 2 (Incompatible treatment): Another rehabilitation project which included a proposal to add a never-built feature on to a historic building involves a much different type of resource in terms of setting and appearance. In this case, the historic resource is a well-preserved resort hotel constructed in 1956, which embodies all the modern conveniences catering to the automobile-oriented leisure traveler of that era. Among the character-defining features of the hotel are the sprawling two-story guest wings informally arranged around a landscaped pool area. A cantilevered porte-cochere and a three-story rectangular block fitted with an illuminated sign established the presence of the hotel from afar.



A significant component of the rehabilitation was the proposal to construct a tower addition that was included in the original plans for the complex but was never built. The rehabilitation proposal called for constructing a four-story tower above the existing two-story portion, thereby completing the architect's original design concept (see below). As in the previous example, the completion of the un-built portion of the original design would have significantly changed the appearance of what was actually built and had acquired historic significance. If completed, the proposed four-story tower addition would have inserted a strong vertical element in this hotel complex that had essentially always been defined by its horizontality. Therefore, the construction of the tower would have substantially altered the historic character of the hotel and, thus, the proposed project did not meet the Standards. As an alternative approach, it was suggested that the new construction be added at another location on the site.



The shaded portions of this elevation drawing show the new tower addition as proposed. Even though the design for the new addition may have been planned when the building was originally conceived, the height and massing of the new construction would have substantially altered the character of the historic resort hotel.