Farms and ranches are characterized by their collection of buildings and structures serving an agricultural purpose. Besides a barn and house, they typically consist of other supporting structures such as a grain storage building or implement shed.

It is not uncommon for the function of a barn to evolve over time just as with ranching and farming activities in general. Continued farm or ranch use usually requires the least amount of change to the historic character of the property. However, it is possible to find new uses for agricultural buildings and properties. Renting out barn space is another example. Sensitive modifications can be undertaken that provide for a new use while preserving the features that make the barn’s historic character.

The barn may be the largest building on your farm. Changes in technology and in farming and ranching practices often affect the use of a barn. When a barn is no longer used for its original agricultural function, there are few it can be rehabilitated and given a new use that retains its historic character. It may be as simple as rehabilitating an existing barn for a new farming use, such as changing a tobacco barn into a tobacco drying barn, or into a storage space. Sensitive alterations can be undertaken that are in keeping with the historic character of the building.

Roof

The roof is integral to the survival of the barn and typically a prominent feature. A poorly maintained roof can allow water and wind to damage the structural support system and interior details. It is necessary to replace the current roof, whether with historically matching materials or a material that is in keeping with the historic character of the building.

Foundation

Foundation repairs are a typical work item in barn rehabilitation. Poorly maintained foundations, cracks, settlement in sections or termites may have caused damage. In cases where the foundation had been constructed of brick or masonry or modern repair techniques can be used. For exposed foundation repair is the most feasible as it will require a repair in a manner that does not alter the historic appearance. Where masonry repairing or repair is needed, appropriate mortar should be used and joints matched to match adjacent historic masonry.

Doors

Historic doors are another feature and should be preserved or replicated to match when needed. If you need to add a door opening to accommodate modern machinery, using modern roll-up or garage style doors is not an option. Use a design and material that is compatible with the historic appearance of the building. If you no longer need a historic door opening, simply fill the doors closed rather than remove them.

Windows

Exterior doors and barn doors, most barns have very few windows. Existing windows should be replaced if possible and replicated with matching once once moved, avoid altering them or otherwise altering their size or appearance. If you install new windows, include only the minimum number and in a manner that does not alter the style, material, and color of the window. Location of new windows is in keeping with the historic character of the barn.

Siding

Siding is a common construction detail in many regions, most historic barns have wood siding in either horizontal or vertical wood boards. Portions of the wood siding are being replaced, in some cases, rather than repair them, it may be possible to match the interior structural to accommodate it. It is still important to replace what is missing or replacement of the full structural system. Test replacement of the interior structural is not appropriate. In adapting a barn, the exposed structural members should be kept as much as possible.

Interior Structural System

The barn’s structural system usually helps determine the interior space. One traditional use for barns has been to store farming machinery. Yet modern machinery often is much larger and more modern. It may be possible to modify the interior structural to accommodate it. It is still important to replace what is missing or replacement of the full structural system. Test replacement of the interior structural is not appropriate. In adapting a barn, the exposed structural members should be kept as much as possible.

Additions

Most barns have a distinctive shape and new additions can alter the building’s overall character. Certain additions cannot accommodate an exterior addition. When an addition to a barn can be undertaken without altering the building’s historic character, the addition should be in keeping with the historic appearance of the building and detailing and should not be overwhelming in size nor alter the principle form of the building.

Using Barns for Residential Housing

In case of a barn and house combination, many barns are sometimes rehabilitated for housing. Changes necessary for a residential conversion may require you to lose the building’s historic qualities, unless undertaken sensibly. Small barns that already have some barn doors can often be reused as a modern structure, provided the rehabilitation preserves the distinctive historic qualities. Some additional opening may be needed for siding but not when they create a dramatic new appearance. Inserting multiple residential units in large barns is usually much more problematic.

Text Credit

The text credits under this program equals 20% of the qualifying costs of your rehabilitation. A project must be “substantial” meaning your rehabilitation qualifies as substantial rehabilitation (a dollar reduction in the amount of taxes you owe.

To locate your State Historic Preservation Office visit www.nps.gov/tps

For additional information visit the Historic Preservation Tax Incentives website at www.irs.gov/opo/tps/about and click on “IRS Commissioner.”

Frequently Asked Questions

Is a tax credit different from a deduction? Yes. A tax credit usually saves you money in income taxes. Unlike a deduction, which reduces taxable income, a credit is a dollar-for-dollar reduction in the amount of taxes you owe.

Can I receive tax credits for buying my farm land? In general, federal tax credits are not available for rehabilitation of your personal home. However, some state offer a similar tax credit for things like farm home renovation. Contact your State historic Preservation Office to determine availability of these credits.

Can I receive tax credits for other farming buildings? If you own and use the farming building as a farm income producing property or as part of a farm income producing property, it may be eligible for a rehabilitation tax credit.

Why does the program exist? Recognizing the importance of preserving our built heritage and the need to encourage the rehabilitation of deteriorated properties, in 1990 Congress created federal tax incentives to promote historic preservation and community revitalization. These tax credit programs stimulate the rehabilitation of historic structures of every period, size, style, and type.

Introduction to Federal Tax Credits for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings

The Program

Federal Tax Credits

The Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program

Federal tax credits for qualified rehabilitation expenses. Property owners across the country have already used these tax incentives to rehabilitate a wide range of historic buildings.

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First-time user guides for owners of small buildings interested in the federal rehabilitation tax credits are prepared pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, which directs the Interior’s Historic Advisory Board and other national organizations interested in rehabilitation and reuse of historic structures. 

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Three Steps to Determine if a Project is Eligible for Tax Credits

First: Is your barn listed in the National Register?

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of historic places worthy of preservation. Properties may be listed as part of historic districts, historic structures, or as National Monuments. Many communities have created rural historic districts to list historic farms and ranches that have old barns. Historic buildings in this type of district may be found in farmlands, as opposed to a historic district in a city that has been completely transformed. Historic barns may also be listed in more popular areas, such as small towns or rural areas. Barns are particularly important in a town setting. The easiest way to determine if your property is listed is to contact your local planning office or State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

If your property is located in a National Register district, it still must be designated by the National Park Service as a property that contributes to the historic character of the district, qualifying it as a "historic listed structure." Not every structure is contributing. For example, when historic districts are designated, they are usually associated with a particular area, and not individual buildings. Or, as is the case, a 1939 barn would not contribute and would not be eligible for a tax credit at all. The tax credit is available only to the landowners, or those who own the barn during 1952 could be eligible for the tax credit.

Second: Will your rehabilitation be substantial?

The cost of rehabilitation must be at least $10,000 or 25% of the barn's adjusted basis used to tax purposes. The following questions can help you determine if your project will be substantial.

A- B - C - D - E

A = purchase price of the barn and land
B = cost of the land or the barn
C = cost attributed to buildings other than the barn
D = appreciation taken on the barn for tax purposes
E = value of capital improvements made to the barn since its purchase

For example, assume a number of years ago, Mr. MacDonald purchased a small farm with a barn, house, barn, ice house, and implant shed. His initial purchase price was $100,000. Of that purchase price, $70,000 was attributed to the cost of the barn and $30,000 was attributed to the cost of buildings other than the barn. Over the years, Mr. MacDonald has depreciated the barn for tax purposes by $10,000. Recently, he invested $20,000 to replace the roof on the barn. Is the foundation, the insulation, and the site plan improvements of the barn, and MacDonald's initial investment of $20,000 qualify as a substantial improvement? If he completes the application process and receives approval, Mr. MacDonald is eligible for a 20% credit on his rehabilitation expenses, or a $4,000 credit. In some cases, such as long-standing ownership, alternate means of establishing the base for tax purposes for the barn may be necessary.

If you have owned the barn for a long time, as a substantial improvement by completing and submitting Part 1 of the Historic Preservation Certification Application described on the next page.

Third: How does your project become "certified"?

To apply for the National Park Service building tax credit, you must complete and submit Part 1 of the application form. This is a set of 10 rules of good form and practice. Each rule has a set of 7 items for the historic property. The building tax credit is a set of government regulations that are intended to avoid giving away governmental resources in the form of tax credits. A project that meets all the rules is your Request for Certification of Completed Work. This is a presentation of the finished rehabilitation and once approved by the National Park Service, serves as documentation to the Internal Revenue Service that your project is a rehabilitation. Approval of the Part A application is a condition for obtaining tax credits.

You can request the National Park Service to designate your property as a "historic listed structure" by completing and submitting Part 1 of the Historic Preservation Certification Application described on the next page. In the application, you describe the condition of the barn and the planned rehabilitation work. The application needs to be completed in sequential order. After you have completed Part 1 of the application, you may wish to forward a copy with a recommendation to the National Park Service, which will issue the final decision for each part of the application. It is especially important to submit Part 2 before beginning work, because if your project proposal does not meet the Standards, you are not provided an opportunity to modify the plans. All submitted material is your Request for Certification of Completed Work. This is a presentation of the finished rehabilitation and once approved by the National Park Service, serves as documentation to the Internal Revenue Service that your project is a rehabilitation. Approval of the Part A application is a condition for obtaining tax credits.

Photographs of the property and buildings prior to rehabilitation are essential. Think of the pictures as providing a "virtual tour" of your property, changes planned, and "before" and "after" views. Show the condition of each major building feature (see sample, left, below) and ample drawings. Show the condition and views of the property prior to beginning work (exterior and interior as well as the historic district map and site plan, and floor plan, and elevation drawings if exterior changes are planned). On a copy of the historic district map, mark where your property is located. It is also important to include a site plan showing the location of your property such as farm house, barn, barn, cattle, barn, etc. and location of other important site features such as a windmill, well, etc. You can request a set of 10 rules of good form and practice. Each rule has a set of 7 items for the historic property. The building tax credit is a set of government regulations that are intended to avoid giving away governmental resources in the form of tax credits. A project that meets all the rules is your Request for Certification of Completed Work. This is a presentation of the finished rehabilitation and once approved by the National Park Service, serves as documentation to the Internal Revenue Service that your project is a rehabilitation. Approval of the Part A application is a condition for obtaining tax credits.

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The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of places included in the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is a list of properties that meet the criteria for inclusion in the National Register. The application process is designed to identify which buildings, including the barn, contribute to the National Register. The National Park Service will then be responsible for evaluating the application, and if the barn is determined to be eligible, it will be added to the National Register.

The barn in a district is contributing. For example, when historic buildings contribute to the historic character of the district, thus providing buildings such as a private residence, even if the barn is not contributing, a tax credit may be available for the entire property. The barn in a district is contributing. For example, when historic buildings contribute to the historic character of the district, thus providing buildings such as a private residence, even if the barn is not contributing, a tax credit may be available for the entire property.

The barn is two stories with a gambrel roof, and board and batten siding. It is rectangular in shape and has an attached calf shed. The roof has modern asphalt shingles. The board and batten siding which is deteriorated. The barn is two stories with a gambrel roof, and board and batten siding. It is rectangular in shape and has an attached calf shed. The roof has modern asphalt shingles.

Since he intends to spend $20,000 to replace the roof on the barn, the foundation, and exterior, the application needs to be completed in sequential order. Second: Will your rehabilitation be "substantial"? The application needs to be completed in sequential order. Second: Will your rehabilitation be "substantial"? The application needs to be completed in sequential order.

The Application
The National Preservation Certification Application (NPS Form 10-188) consists of 5 parts. This form can be downloaded from the web at www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/ or a copy can be obtained from your NPS Office.

Part 1 of the application is a request to obtain a determination by the National Park Service that your barn is a certified historic structure. This is a necessary, producing buildings such as a private residence, even if the barn is not contributing, a tax credit may be available for the entire property. The barn in a district is contributing. For example, when historic buildings contribute to the historic character of the district, thus providing buildings such as a private residence, even if the barn is not contributing, a tax credit may be available for the entire property.

The joint profile will match the existing as well. Where the south side will be replaced with board and batten siding which is deteriorated.

Keep in mind that if you are rehabilitating two contributing buildings on your property, you must calculate the costs for each building separately. The cost of rehabilitation is not to exceed the basis of the property in the project. This is the maximum amount of expense that may be undertaken and approved by the National Park Service. The maximum amount of expense that may be undertaken and approved by the National Park Service. If the application is not completed in sequential order, the application will not be evaluated. If the application is not completed in sequential order, the application will not be evaluated.

The barn is not contributing to the historic character of the district, thus providing buildings such as a private residence, even if the barn is not contributing, a tax credit may be available for the entire property. The barn in a district is contributing. For example, when historic buildings contribute to the historic character of the district, thus providing buildings such as a private residence, even if the barn is not contributing, a tax credit may be available for the entire property.

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First: Is your barn listed in the National Register?

If your property is located in a National Register district, it still must be designated by the National Park Service as a property that contributes to the historic character of the district, thus qualifying it as a "historic contributing" structure. Not every barn is a contributing one. For example, when historic districts are designated, they are usually associated with a particular period of history, such as 1840-1855. In this case, a 1900 barn would not contribute and would not be eligible for a historic tax credit. Even if a building is contributing, a barn burning in 1950 could not qualify for the tax credit.

Tourism and economic development may not qualify for the tax credit, such as a new roof for a barn might not be eligible. A project as simple as a new roof for a barn might not qualify for the tax credit. A project as simple as a new roof for a barn might not qualify for the tax credit.

Second: Will your rehabilitation be "substantial?"

The cost of rehabilitation must meet the greater of $5,000 or the barn's adjusted basis used for tax purposes. The following methods will help you determine if your project will be substantial:

A - B - C + D = E

A = purchase price of the property and land
B = cost of the land at the time of purchase
C = cost attributed to buildings other than the barn
D = depreciation taken on the barn tax for tax purposes
E = cost of capital improvements made to the barn since it was first placed in service.

For example, assume that you purchase an old farm with a barn and house, barn, ice house, and implant shed. The total price is $100,000. Of that purchase price, $70,000 was attributed to the cost of the barn and $30,000 was attributed to the cost of buildings other than the barn. Over the years, the barn has depreciated accelerated depreciation of 20% per year. The result is a cost of $5,000. Therefore, the barn's adjusted basis would be $35,000. If your barn is no longer contributing and if its historic significance is not a major factor in the area, you must complete a Part 2 application. Part 2 of the application is where you describe the condition of the barn prior to rehabilitation and the proposed work. The application needs to be completed in sequential order.

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Rehabilitating Historic Barns  

Farms and barns are characterized by their collection of buildings and structures serving agricultural purposes. Besides a barn house, they typically consist of other supporting structures such as a grain storage building or implement shed.

It is not uncommon for the function of a barn to evolve over time, changing from agricultural use to non-agricultural use. The most successful barn rehabilitation projects will follow these guidelines: preserve the historic setting of the barn, repair and reuse as much historic material as possible, avoid changing historic door or window openings; preserve the distinctive qualities of the interior spaces, and retain as much of the historic structural system as possible. In addition, it is necessary to avoid using the historic building and next over converted or rehabilitating it for a new use.

Rehabilitating Historic Barns (continued)

Siding

The most successful barn rehabilitation projects will follow these guidelines: preserve the historic setting of the barn, repair and reuse as much historic material as possible, avoid changing historic door or window openings; preserve the distinctive qualities of the interior spaces, and retain as much of the historic structural system as possible. In addition, it is necessary to avoid using the historic building and next over converted or rehabilitating it for a new use.

Rehabilitating Historic Barns (continued)

Siding

The roof is integral to the survival of the barn and typically a use, the character-defining elements of the barn, including farming or ranching purposes or for a new non-agricultural storage space is another example. Sensitive modifications can character. It may be as simple as rehabilitating an existing barn for its original agricultural function, there are ways it can be exhibit space have all been adaptive reuses of historic farm and much property. Sensitivity toward changes that understand that for a provision while preserving the features that make up the barn’s historical character.

The barn may be the largest building on your farm. Changes in technology and in farming and marketing practices often alter the use of a barn. When a barn is no longer needed for its original agricultural function, there are ways it can be rehabilitated and given a new use that enhances its historical character. It may be as simple as rehabilitating an existing barn for a new farming use, such as changing a wheat barn into a horse stable, a viable for historian. Rehabilitating a dairy barn into storage space is another example. The following modifications can preserve a historic barn for its new use.

Whether you are rehabilitating a barn for continued farming or changing purposes or for a new agricultural use, the character-defining elements of the barn, including those that follow, should be treated with care.

Roof

The roof is integral to the survival of the barn and typically a very prominent feature. A poorly maintained roof can allow water and wind to damage the structural support system and interior details. It is necessary to replace the current roof, with its historically matching material or a material that is in keeping with the historical character of the building.

Foundation

Foundation repairs are a typical work in barn rehabilitation. Foundation problems are common in areas that have soils in sections or trenches may have caused damage. In cases where the grading and construction of the foundation or even modern repair techniques can be used. For exposed foundation repairs such as a new masonry wall, repair techniques can be used in a manner that does not alter the historic appearance. Where Masonry repair or replacement is needed, appropriate mortar should be used and joints tooled to match adjacent masonry.

Doors

Doors historic elements are another prominent feature and should be preserved or replaced to match when needed. If you need to alter a door opening to accommodate new machinery, using modern roll-up or garage style doors is often a replacement. Use a design and material that is compatible with the historic appearance of the building. If you no longer need a historic door opening, simply do the doors closed rather than removed them.

Windows

Windows do not need to be fixed up. Exposed metal and barns, most barns have few or very few windows. Existing windows should be repaired if possible and replaced with matching ones where needed, avoiding altering them or otherwise altering their size and appearance. If you install new windows, include only the minimum number needed, pay attention to the style and color, and ensure that the style, number, and location of new windows are in keeping with the historic character of the barn.

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The siding on this barn was replaced with matching siding, a treatment that meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties. This and other guidance on rehabilitating small buildings can be found on our web site at www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/ or by clicking on “IRS Connection.”

The roof is integral to the survival of the barn and typically a very prominent feature. A poorly maintained roof can add to the feeling of historic character.

Roof

The roof of this barn is an essential part of the building and not overwhelm or redefine its historic character. In adapting a barn, the exposed structural members should be kept visible as much as possible.

Do you own a historic barn? Contact your State Historic Preservation Office for more information on federal tax incentives to rehabilitate a wide range of historic barns.

In more populated areas, historic barns are sometimes reused as a single-family residence, provided the rehabilitation does not diminish the building’s historic character, the addition should be simple in form and in a manner that does not alter the historic appearance. When. Windows

The windows on this barn were replaced with matching windows, a treatment that meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties.

The most successful barn rehabilitation projects will follow these guidelines: preserve the historic setting of the barn; repair and reuse as much historic material as possible, avoid changing historic door or window openings; preserve the distinctive qualities of the interior spaces, and retain as much of the historic structural features as possible. In addition, it is necessary to compare with the historic building and not overwhelm or redefine its historic character.

For more information contact the National Park Service’s Barns Programs, Barns@nps.gov for a copy of Barns: Considerations for Rehabilitating Barns, available online at www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/publications/ or by emailing Barns@nps.gov for a copy.

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