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Interpreting
The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

Subject: Changes to Shotgun Interior Plan

Applicable Standards: 2. Retention of Historic Character

Issue: The shotgun house with its typical two to four room linear plan, is an important vernacular building type found most often in the South. The long, narrow form--one room wide--gave these buildings their descriptive name. Sometimes two units were built together as a duplex, side by side, each having its own separate entrance. Shotgun houses are almost always frame buildings with gable ends to the street, sometimes with small open porches on the front. The interiors are modest in features and trim.

Shotgun houses are small and, by their very nature, sometimes difficult to adapt to modern family living. These narrow buildings often do not have separate interior corridor systems, which leaves no privacy when passing through one room to get to the next. There are few closets in these houses, and makeshift kitchens or baths are often added to the rear. The common issue in rehabilitation is how to make modest changes that retain the historically characteristic plan of the shotgun while providing privacy and, in some cases, adding closets to the bedrooms of these houses.

Application (Compatible treatment): This late-19th century house exhibits the typical plan and details of the shotgun. The house is 15 feet wide and approximately 57 feet long with a net usable space of 750 square feet. The rehabilitation of this one bedroom unit into a two bedroom unit required additional privacy and closet space. The redesign of interior spaces without major wall changes was achieved by adding a side corridor for a portion of the mid-section of the house to provide a privacy wall for the master bedroom. This wall, reversible in the future, has double glass doors which filter light into the bedroom and, when open, add to the spaciousness of the plan.

By combining the dining room with an eat-in kitchen, it was possible to use the former kitchen space for a small

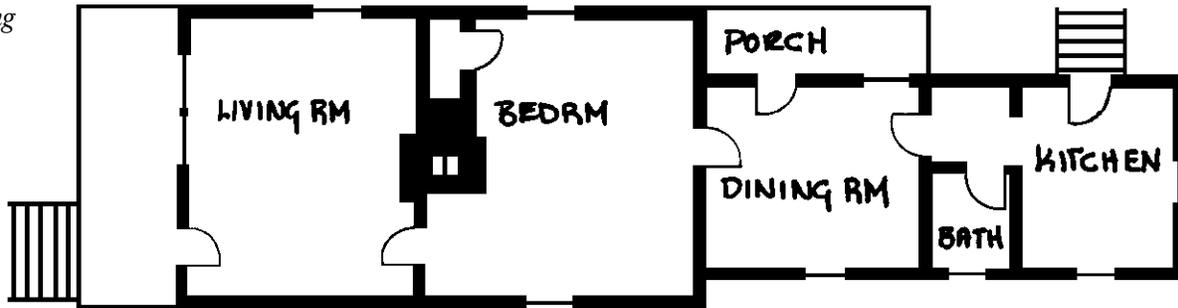


These shotgun houses are part of a historic district that has strong design guidelines which encourage the retention of historic features and historic materials typical of this regional building type.

private bedroom at the rear of the house. The reconfiguring of the existing bathroom and passageway also provided additional closet space for the small rear bedroom. The only exterior change was the enclosure of a small side porch to make room for expanded closet space. The porch is not readily visible from the public right-of-way because of the narrow side lots. The recessed paneling and a new small, high clerestory window underscore the fact that the porch enclosure, while compatible in materials, is an alteration of the original building.

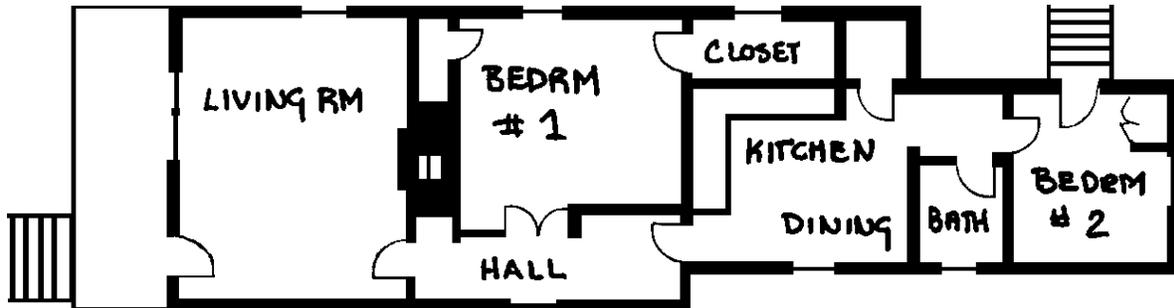
The changes needed to increase the number of bedrooms and provide privacy and closet space did not adversely alter the basic form or circulation of this historic shotgun house. The significant historic character of the building and historic district in which it is located have thus been preserved.

Existing
Plan:



Plan: Before. Note the typical historic linear plan of this shotgun house and the need to move through rooms from front to back. This open plan works well with one bedroom, but does not afford adequate privacy when two bedrooms are needed. Note also the small open side porch which is subsequently enclosed.

Rehab
Plan:



Plan: After. Note the placement of the former kitchen into the dining room which allows the rear room to be changed into a small bedroom. The added wall at the middle of the building creates a small corridor to give privacy to the master bedroom. Most trim, the windows, and fireplace surrounds were retained.



Interior Detail. The new wall added to create a private master bedroom is easily reversible. In addition, the glazed doors retain a sense of the light filled room when kept in an open position.



Exterior detail: Front porch before rehabilitation.

Information provided by Michael W. Miller, AIA, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division

These bulletins are issued to explain preservation project decisions made by the U.S. Department of the Interior. The resulting determinations, based on the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#), are not necessarily applicable beyond the unique facts and circumstances of each particular case.