



ITS  
NUMBER 3

Interpreting  
The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

Subject: New Additions to Mid-size Historic Buildings

- Applicable Standards:
- 2. Retention of Historic Character
  - 9. Compatible New Additions/Alterations
  - 10. Reversibility of New Additions/Alterations

**Issue:** Sometimes it may be necessary to add extra space to a historic building when it is being rehabilitated to satisfy new use requirements. The best adaptive use is always one that requires the least amount of change to the historic building, which includes being able to fit the new use into the existing structure. But even comparatively large historic buildings may need more space to house certain practical functions that were not part of the historic use, such as mechanical equipment, an elevator shaft, or a stair tower, or just to provide more rentable or occupiable space to make the project economically viable.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation permit new additions to historic buildings if the new addition is compatible with the historic building and its historic character. A new addition will usually meet the Standards if: (1) it is located at the rear, or on another secondary and inconspicuous elevation of the building; (2) its size and scale are limited and appropriate for the historic building; (3) the new addition does not obscure character-defining features of the historic building; and (4) the new addition is designed in such a way that clearly differentiates the new from the old.

**Application 1** (*Compatible addition*): Rehabilitated into apartments, this two and one-half story brick structure was originally constructed in 1887 as an orphanage, but most recently had been

used for offices. This building, L-shaped in plan, extends along a major street for most of a city block, and it is anchored by a three-story double-towered entrance at one end and a smaller simpler tower at the other end. The developer determined that more room was needed to ensure the financial success of the conversion of this building into residential apartments. Accordingly, a new two-story addition was planned at the rear and side of the former orphanage. Constructed of brick, and painted to help blend with the historic building that is also painted, the addition is simply designed, and features flat-arched windows with two-over-two sash that contrast with the rounded arches of the historic windows. This new addition meets the Standards. It is clearly differentiated from the historic building, and it is compatible in materials, design, size, and scale. A row of townhouses in front of the new addition further minimizes its visibility from the street.



*The main front entrance of the orphanage after its conversion to residential apartments.*

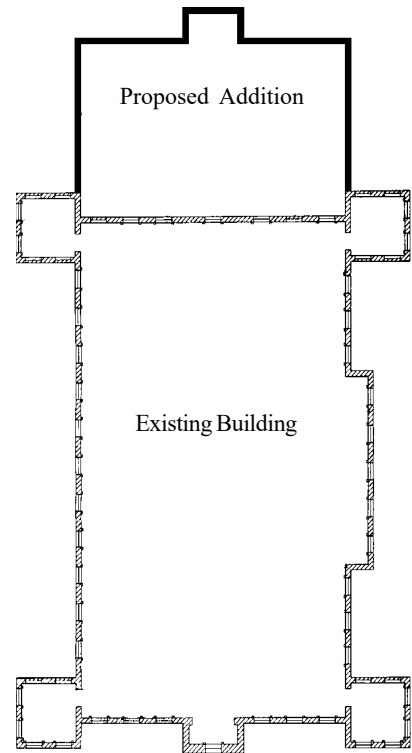


*The side wing that extends behind the main entrance to the building prior to rehabilitation, and construction of the new addition.*



*The new addition at the rear of the side wing is unobtrusive, and compatible with the building's historic character. Townhouses (on the right) in front of the addition further limit its visibility.*

**Application 2 (Compatible addition):** A historic three-story, 1879 brick school building, long abandoned, was rehabilitated for use as a women's and children's center. The school is a square, Italianate building with decorative towers at each corner, now flat-roofed since the loss many years ago of their Romanesque-arched open bell towers. Although the existing building was not small, it lacked sufficient space to fulfill the center's needs for private and communal living and dining areas for the residents, as well as for administration and staff offices. To provide additional space, two small non-significant additions were removed and a three-story brick addition was constructed at the rear of the school. The new brick is harmonious with the historic brick and the design of the addition is very simple. To further differentiate the addition from the historic building, the windows in the new addition have flat arches and are very plain and unadorned in contrast to the more decorative window openings and stone sills on the original schoolhouse. The new addition is compatible in size, scale, materials and location with the historic building and, thus, meets the Standards.



*The rear elevation of the school building before the removal of the two later, non-significant additions.*



*The simple design of the new addition at the rear of the building is completely compatible with the historic character.*



*The school, which is prominently situated on a corner, is shown after rehabilitation. The new addition at the back (right) cannot be seen from the corner.*