



## Interpreting The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

Subject: Incompatible Alterations to the Setting and Environment of a Historic Property

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

**Issue:** Setting is essential to a historic property's significance. Drastic changes to the surrounding grading, landscape features, or incompatible new construction on the site, diminish a historic property's ability to convey its historic significance. Therefore, such alterations do not conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

**Application** (*Incompatible treatment*): The rehabilitation of this 1935 Spanish Colonial Revival-style railroad depot involved temporarily removing the structure from the site in order to prepare the site for redevelopment, and then returning the building to the site in a slightly different location. The depot would be relocated about 85 feet south and 21 feet west of its original location, but otherwise it would maintain the same orientation to the street and to the railroad tracks. Relocation of the depot, which required approval from the National Register of Historic Places, did not have a significant impact on the historic setting of the building and appeared to meet the Standards.

However, as more details of the project were provided, it became apparent that the proposed site development would have a negative impact on the historic character of the prop-



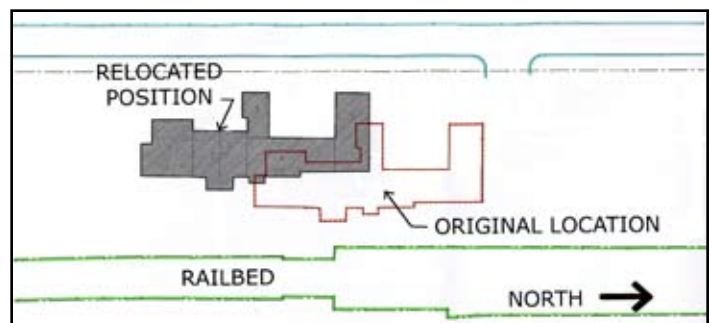
Passenger waiting area before rehabilitation.

erty. The proposed relocation of the building was not a matter of simply moving the building some distance south and west from its original location. The rehabilitation project also involved excavating the site in order to build an underground parking structure and placing the historic building on top of it. In addition, extensive new landscaping features and new construction several stories taller than the historic depot were also proposed on the site.

The extensive reconfiguration of the site significantly altered the historic setting of the depot. Originally, the building sat



Primary street elevation before rehabilitation.



Site plan showing the relocation of the depot on the site.



*Exit leading to train platform before rehabilitation.*

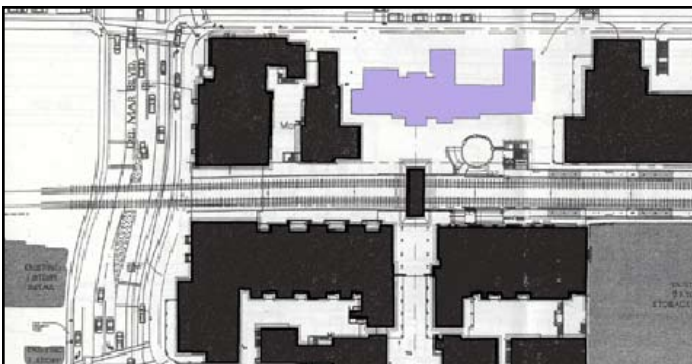
on a slab poured at grade. Historically, minimal changes in elevation between the surrounding grade and the interior floor permitted passengers to pass smoothly from the sidewalk through the building and on to the railroad platform. This gradual, almost imperceptible, change in grade was a significant aspect of the building's design.

When the building was relocated on the site, it was placed



*Exit with new steps to former train platform after rehabilitation.*

on a raised foundation. Because the moved building sits higher than the surrounding grade, steps have been added at the depot's exit onto the former train platform. The new difference in grade also required adding railings between the columns of the formerly open arcaded area. New planters, fountains, diverse paving patterns, and other new features also created an elaborate landscape that is not compatible with the simple and functional setting of the historic depot.



*Site plan showing new construction as dark shaded areas.*



*New landscape plan showing new paving patterns and raised planters (shown in green).*



*View from northwest corner of depot after rehabilitation showing the surrounding new construction.*

Furthermore, the formerly expansive, almost pastoral, landscape that surrounded the depot consisting largely of grass-covered areas dotted with small shrubs, olive trees, and clusters of palm trees has been drastically reduced by the new construction. In addition, the height, massing, scale, and proximity of the new construction dwarf the historic depot building. The cumulative effect of all these changes negatively impacts the historic character of the former depot. Accordingly, the project does not meet the Standards.

Antonio Aguilar, Technical Preservation Services, National Park Service

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.