



**Subject:** Rooftop Additions

- Applicable Standards:**
- 2. Retention of Historic Character
  - 5. Preservation of Distinctive Features, Finishes, and Craftsmanship
  - 9. Compatible New Additions/Alterations

**Issue:** The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation allow the construction of new additions if they do not destroy significant fabric, and if their design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the property and the historic district if applicable. However, not all historic buildings can be enlarged in a manner that is consistent with the Standards, whether for reasons of size, siting, or location within a district. With regard to rooftop additions, the Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings recommend that new rooftop additions be designed so that they are inconspicuous from the public right-of-way, are set back from the primary elevation of the building, and do not damage character-defining features of the historic building. Rooftop additions are almost never appropriate for buildings that are less than four stories high. Generally, rooftop additions should not be more than one story in height, and are more compatible on buildings that are adjacent to taller buildings or dense urban environments. Rooftop additions that do not meet these principles generally will not meet the Standards.

**Application 1** (*Incompatible treatment*): A school built in 1923, and expanded in later years, was proposed to be rehabilitated for continued educational use as a community



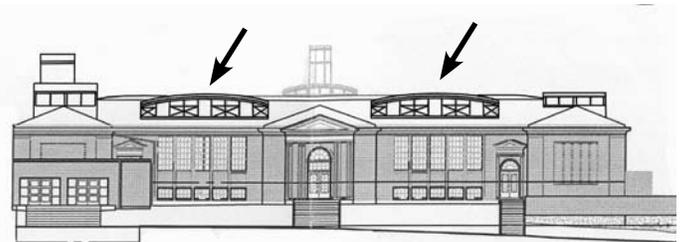
The school prior to rehabilitation.



Proposed rooftop additions to school building.

resource center, a housing complex for senior citizens, a day school, and a boarding school. The building was less than three stories, sat prominently on the street and was visible on all elevations. Under the initial proposal, boarding students would live in the historically unoccupied attic of the original, 1923, portion of the school.

Because the attic lacked adequate headroom, dormers were proposed for the visible front and side elevations. The Stan-



A drawing of the proposed dormers shows the impact this construction would have had on the physical fabric and the historic character of the building.

dards call for additions to be differentiated as new elements. The proposed dormers were very large and out-of-scale with the historic building, featuring an arched profile and contemporary windows that contrasted strongly with the relatively traditional and subdued materials and design of the Colonial Revival structure. In addition, the dormers would not only impose a new form upon the roof, but would also require substantial alteration of the physical fabric of the roof itself. For these reasons, the proposal did not meet the Standards.

**Application 2** (*Compatible treatment*): A rooftop addition was proposed for a four-story apartment building that was being rehabilitated for continued residential use. The building was constructed in 1914 in a simply articulated, Classical Revival style with a slightly-raised limestone base, a brick facade, beltcourses, and some decoratively-carved keystones on the first floor. It is capped by a simple but prominent dentilled cornice. This building is one of several large apartment buildings located in a primarily small scale, single-family residential neighborhood. It is surrounded on both sides and across the street by two to two-and-one-half story rowhouses, and therefore is highly visible within the district. For this reason alone, it might appear that the addition of any more height to this building would not meet the Standards.

However, a new floor was added that is only minimally visible on the non-significant side elevations and is imperceptible from directly across the street. Setting the new floor into the flat roof plane lowered the profile of the addition to the height of a half story. The slanted front edge further minimized the appearance of the addition and concealed integral skylights. The mass blended with the solid, unadorned side walls of the historic building. This rooftop addition does not impact the historic character of the building and is in conformance with the Standards.



*This early twentieth century apartment building was actually constructed as two buildings of harmonious but slightly different design.*



*New rooftop addition and stairtower visible on the south elevation.*

*New rooftop addition and stairtower visible on the secondary north elevation, meets the Standards, and is compatible with the historic building.*

