

HISTORIC PRESERVATION SERIES



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Guidelines for Preparing a Historic Structures Report

A historic structures report (HSR) is a study designed to evaluate and assess the condition of historic buildings both for management purposes and for planning restoration or rehabilitation undertakings. A HSR is a reference document that can be used in conjunction with other information to minimize the loss of significant material or character when making decisions that will affect a historic building or structure.

The following is a recommended outline for a HSR. The essential components of the report consist of an Introduction; Property History; Evaluation and Assessment; Photographic/Drawing Documentation; Recommendations; and Summary of Study Results, along with appropriate Appendices.

I. Introduction – This is the administrative section of the report. Its intent is to provide information concerning why the study was performed, by whom, and when.

- ◆ Purpose of the report
- ◆ Preservation objectives
- ◆ Inspection team data
 - Names
 - Positions
 - Addresses
 - Dates
- ◆ Property Location
 - Physical location
 - Lot and Block

II. Brief History of the Property – The intent of this section of the report is to provide the historic context for which present architectural elements will be assessed.

- ◆ Statement of building's significance and period of significance
- ◆ Historic overview of the building
 - Persons (architect, designer, builder, owner in historic period) associated with builders
 - Historical documentation
 - Chronology of alterations and changes to the building
- ◆ Architectural description of building at time of its historic significance
- ◆ Architectural description of present appearance

III. Evaluation and Assessment – This section provides a detailed evaluation and assessment of the building's architectural elements. It should discuss the following elements by providing assessment of the historic time period, condition, code violation or deficiencies for each element, and any action necessary to correct problems. The following elements may not apply to all buildings and should be viewed only as a guide.

◆ Site

- Walkways
- Parking
- Floral landscaping
- Fences/Walls
- Landscaping plan
- Utility services
- Site plan

◆ Exterior Envelope

- Foundation
- Exterior wall structure/insulation/material/finishes
- Openings (doors and windows)
- Exterior stairs
- Porches/decks/stoops/balconies
- Turret/towers/steeple
- Exterior ornamentation
- Chimneys
- Cornice/horizontal eaves/gable fascia/soffit
- Roof structure/decking/sheathing/insulation/covering
- Roof vents/openings/flashing/drainage

◆ Interior Envelope

- Wall structure/material/trim/finishes
- Fireplaces
- Openings (doors and windows)
- Ceiling structure/material/trim/finish
- Floor structure/insulation/material/finish
- Stairs/elevators
- Built-in furniture
- Columns

◆ Fire and Life Safety

- Code variances
- Egress: lighting/signs/paths/hazardous areas/distances
- Stairs/handrails
- Doors/hardware
- Intrusion/fire detection systems
- Pull station
- Emergency phone
- Annunciation
- Extinguisher/stand pipe/sprinklers
- Fire stops

◆ Handicapped Accessibility

- Accessibility plan
- Designated parking
- Exterior entry route
- Exterior accessible entry
- Accessible rest rooms
- Accessible drinking fountain

◆ Public Health

- Domestic water treatment
- Wastewater treatment
- Refuse handling

◆ Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning

- Heating equipment
- Heating piping network
- Heating boilers
- Cooling equipment
- Cooling piping network
- Ventilation air handlers
- Ventilation fans
- Ventilation duct work
- HVAC decorative features

◆ Plumbing

- Water piping network
- Water equipment
- Hot water heaters
- Water fixtures
- Wastewater piping network
- Fuel type/storage

◆ Electrical

- Incoming service transformer
- Incoming service line/ground
- Main distribution panel/access/markings
- Power/light panel service cap/access/markings
- Conductors/raceway
- Lighting

◆ Structural

- Engineering report on safety and load-bearing limits

IV. **Photographic and Drawing Documentation of Present Appearance** – This section of the report should provide visual documentation of elements discussed above and be keyed to the elements being documented.

- ◆ Photographs (**black and white**) documenting elements discussed under Section III.
- ◆ Architectural drawings consisting of, at a minimum, at least floor plan(s) and exterior elevations with chronology of alterations identified.

V. **Recommendations**- This section should include the reason for conducting the study, *i.e.* the feasibility of rehabilitating the building for a proposed function, as well as describing the building's condition and providing an evaluation.

- ◆ Evaluation of appropriate uses for the building
- ◆ Estimated restoration/rehabilitation costs to address deficiencies
- ◆ Conceptual drawings of restored/rehabilitated building
- ◆ Evaluation of potential impacts on building resulting from proposed uses
- ◆ Recommended steps for preservation treatment
- ◆ Recommendations for further study

VI. Summary of Study Results

VII. Appendices

- ◆ Identification of Archival Sources
- ◆ Copies of pertinent correspondence
- ◆ Historic drawings
- ◆ Summary of Agreements
 - Easements of use agreements
 - Deeds
 - Zoning

Sources for Additional Information:

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“Documentation of Historic Structures.” *Association for Preservation Technology Bulletin*. Vol. XIV, No.4 (1982): 19-22.

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“Planning Standard Guidelines for Inspection and Evaluation of the Structural Condition of Existing Buildings.” *Building Performance: Function, Preservation and Rehabilitation*. ASTM STP 901. Philadelphia: American Society for Testing and Materials., 1985.

For Additional Information

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