

PRESERVATION PHILOSOPHY

(Excerpt from *Historic Homes of Phoenix: An Architectural & Preservation Guide*)

Historic preservation, like any system of values, has a philosophical basis or ethic. Additionally, work in the field conforms to a set of operating principles which has been developed and tested over time. As a member of a Certified Local Government, part of the federal historic preservation program, the Historic Preservation Office adheres to the preservation principles set forth in National Park Service's *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*. Some of the basic principles of these standards are summarized below in simplified and reworded form.

IDENTIFY, RETAIN AND PRESERVE

The first step in treating a historic building is to identify those architectural features that give a building its visual character. These character-defining features should, whenever possible, be retained and preserved rather than altered, covered, destroyed or replaced in order to prevent loss of character.

PROTECT AND MAINTAIN

After identifying and retaining the essential materials and design features, protect and maintain them. Keeping buildings in good physical condition lessens the need for expensive major repairs or replacement later. Regular or "cyclical" maintenance may include such treatments as filling in cracks in stucco, re-painting, caulking, securing flashing and so forth.

REPAIR

When character-defining materials and features become well-worn or damaged, additional repair work of the original fabric is recommended. Repair should begin with the "patching, piecing-in, splicing, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing or upgrading..." The next level of repair entails "limited replacement in-kind" with matching or compatible material when encountering badly deteriorated or missing pieces. It is advisable to match or closely approximate both the material and the original design of the feature.

REPLACE

It is preferable to repair rather than to replace. But when a feature is missing or dangerous, or the extent of damage precludes repair and physical evidence exists to document the nature of the feature, then replacement may be appropriate. When replacing, use matching or compatible materials and repeat the original design, unless doing so causes design flaws, such as flat window sills which drain improperly.

DESIGN FOR MISSING HISTORIC FEATURES

When a major exterior feature, such as a window or wall portion of roof, is entirely missing, it is no longer a character-defining feature unless it can be reconstructed based upon its documented historical appearance. To recreate such a missing feature in order to restore the completeness of the building's overall design, two options are appropriate. The first is to reconstruct the feature to exactly match its historic appearance, provided sufficient documentation exists. A second acceptable option is to recreate the feature in a new design compatible with the missing feature and the overall architectural character of the building. As the *Standards* state, "The new design should always take into account the size, scale, and material of the historic building itself and, most importantly, should be clearly differentiated so that a false historical appearance is not created."

ALTERATIONS AND/OR ADDITIONS TO HISTORIC BUILDINGS

When alterations or additions are needed to allow for a building's continued use, design these in ways that do not "radically change, obscure, or destroy character-defining spaces, materials, features, or finishes." Needed exterior alterations should generally be made to secondary elevations or areas of the roof that are out of sight from the public view. It may also be advantageous to remove visually intrusive material or features detracting from the building's historic character, allowing repair or reconstruction of the underlying original material.

The *Standards* emphasize that exterior additions should be "considered only after it is determined that (essential) needs cannot be met by altering secondary, i.e., non-character-defining interior spaces." If it is determined that an addition is "the only viable alternative," its design should be both architecturally compatible, and "clearly differentiated from the historic building...so that the character-defining features are not radically changed, obscured, damaged, or destroyed."

HEALTH AND SAFETY CODE REQUIREMENTS; ENERGY RETROFITTING

Care should be taken that these alterations, such as solar collectors or ramps for the handicapped, be designed and placed so as not to radically change, obscure, or damage or destroy character-defining materials or features" in the rehabilitation process.

The following two additional preservation principles deal with appropriate ways of improving existing older homes.

REVERSING ADVERSE ALTERATIONS

Most of Phoenix's historic homes have undergone alterations during the decades of their existence. Some alterations have been done sensitively and compatibly, preserving and enhancing the building's character-defining features. Other modifications, often done by earlier owners, were done with good intentions but without the benefit of preservation education. These adverse changes typically include removing, covering or altering the basic nature of original features.

Consider reversing earlier adverse alterations. When doing so, identify the nature of the original feature and repair or replace it while recapturing the original appearance. Use matching or very similar designs and materials.

OVER IMPROVING AND MODERNIZING

Over improving, as the term is used here, does not refer to spending too much on your house or overbuilding for the neighborhood. It refers, instead, to efforts intended to improve the appearance of a house by making it fancier or by changing its style. Such efforts are not encouraged.

Each particular house has its own character and assets. Houses are not more significant because they are bigger and more decorative. Plain houses have as much historical and architectural value as "high style" houses. Small houses are as important as large ones and mid-twentieth century homes may be as significant as late nineteenth century ones.

Adding ornament or extraneous architectural features not originally associated with one's house is not encouraged. Putting a red tiled, gabled roof on a previously flat-roofed Moderne house would destroy its architectural character.