

Terms Commonly Used in Historic Preservation

Adaptive re-use: to take an existing building that had one purpose and renovate it to be used for a different purpose (repurpose).

Architecture: the art and science of making cities and buildings fit with the way we want to live our lives.

Craftsmanship: a skill of making things, often by hand, with passion, care, and attention to details.

Dilapidation: the natural deterioration of a building due to neglect.

Demolish: to knock down a building and remove all debris.

Designation: identifying historic structures and neighborhoods that are subject to regulation in historic preservation ordinances or other preservation laws.

Eminent Domain: powers granted to public agencies to condemn private property, at fair market value, for specific public purposes.

Façade: the exterior surface of a building.

Historic Character: those visual aspects and physical features that make up the appearance of every historic building and make it unique.

Historic District: an area that possess a significant concentration of buildings or sites that have been united through architecture and history.

Historic Significance: a property has been evaluated for its importance to meet the National Register (or state or local historic register) standards.

Integrity: the authenticity of a property's location, design, setting, materials, workmanship found in its historic physical characteristics.

Mothballing: controlling long-term deterioration and protecting a building while it is unoccupied.

National Historic Landmark (NHL): a district, site, building, structure, or object of national historical significance, designated by the Secretary of the Interior under authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935 and entered in the National Register of Historic Places.

Preserve: to maintain a structure's existing form through careful maintenance and repair.

Preservation: protection of buildings and sites of historic significance to keep them intact or free from damage or decay.

Reconstruct: to re-create an historic building that has been damaged or destroyed or to erect a new structure resembling the old using historical, archaeological, and architectural documents.

Refurbish: made to look new again by work such as painting, repairing, and cleaning.

Rehabilitate: a complete overhaul to restore a structure and make it usable again while preserving those portions or features of the property that are historically and culturally significant.

Rehabilitation Tax Credits: the federal government's most significant tax incentive for preservation, offering a 20% credit for rehabilitation of qualifying, income-producing historic structures.

Remodel: to change a building without regard to its distinctive features or style.

Renovate: to repair a structure and make it usable again, without attempting to restore its historic appearance or duplicate original construction methods or material.

Repurpose: reusing an existing building for a purpose other than which it was originally built or designed—think “recycle.”

Restoration: a process that maintains or returns a property to a particular time in its history, while removing later alterations from other periods.

SHPO State Historic Preservation Officer: an official within each state appointed by the governor to administer the state historic preservation program and carry out certain responsibilities relating to federal undertakings within the state.

Stabilize: to protect a building from deterioration by making it structurally secure.

Sustainable Growth: balancing economic prosperity with environmental and social concerns to maintain the quality of life for current generations and ensure future generations will be able to meet their own needs.

Sustainability: the conservation and improvement of our existing built resources as part of efforts to combat climate change, including reuse of historic and older buildings, greening.