

Preservation Plans

Preservation plans are reports that provide guidance for preserving historic resources, serving as road maps for their ongoing use and re-use. They provide prioritized recommendations, following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, often with an estimate of probable costs, for the next steps in a resource's preservation or rehabilitation.

Preservation plans typically explore the past, present, and future of the resource:

1. What is the history and significance of the resource, and what features embody that history?
2. What is the current condition of the resource?
3. What are the recommendations for future work on the resource?

A good report will be tailored to the needs of the resource and the people who maintain, use, and enjoy it.

Many – but not all – historic-resource stewards realize that they will need a planning study, because they envision eventually applying to LCHIP for a rehabilitation grant. Planning studies are key adjuncts to LCHIP's rehabilitation applications for two reasons:

1. Prospective LCHIP rehab projects with a total project cost of \$50,000 or more need to have a completed planning study included with their applications.
2. Modernization (work to improve access, code-compliance, energy efficiency, heating, plumbing, etc.) and routine maintenance activities are not eligible for inclusion in LCHIP projects, unless those activities are necessary to fulfill the recommendations of an Historic Structure Report or other preservation plan for the property.

Preparing a planning study to fulfill the requirements of an LCHIP application is more likely to be successful when the report effectively addresses important questions. For example:

- What is the resource's history and significance?
- What are the features – both primary and secondary – that help define the resource's historic character?
- What is the condition of each of the various elements and parts of the resource?
- Do possible future treatments reflect a sound grasp of the historic resource's needs?
- If modernization is likely to be undertaken sometime in the future, will the new work be done in a way that safeguard's the resource's historic character?
- Will prospective work on the resource embody recognized best practices in historic preservation?

A good planning study provides the perspective, knowledge, and expertise to answer these questions well. A proposal that leaves these questions unanswered, on the other hand, will be of less use.

Not only is a planning study a requirement for projects with a total project cost of \$50,000 or more, but also it shows that the resource's stewards are planning for the future and have carefully considered the needs of the resource, the priorities for repair, and the best means of doing them in a way that respects its historic character.

Because every historic resource is different, emphases of preservation plans tend to vary. Some, for example, may focus on the existing historic fabric of the resource, highlighting conditions such as these:

- There is chronic moisture problem in the basement or crawlspace that needs to be addressed
- The existing roof has reached the end of its useful life and needs to be replaced
- Wooden elements of the building are deteriorating and will need to be repaired
- Masonry is at risk, due to crumbling old mortar
- Glazing putty is falling out of historic windows, which are drafty

Additionally, if conditions warrant, there may also be discussion of modernization activities if, for example:

- The second floor of the building is unusable because egress from that level does not comply with fire and life-safety codes
- Handicapped accessibility to certain areas is poor or nonexistent
- Installation of a fire-suppression (sprinkler) system may be necessary to safely utilize a space
- Restroom facilities are inadequate for a building that will be open to the public
- Installing storm windows would be a good idea to reduce energy costs to heat a building

Preservation plans typically include a mix of text, historic and contemporary photographs, and a site plan. Architectural plans, showing the existing (as-built) plans and elevations of a building, along with possible re-designs to accommodate new uses, may be a good idea to include if the building needs to be adapted to better fulfill its use.

The fullest and most-developed form of a preservation plan is the Historic Structure Report (HSR). Shorter versions are sometimes known as Historic Building Assessments (HBA).

Historic Structure Reports are longer, more expensive, and more detailed. They are appropriate for

- larger structures,

- those with more problems,
- those experiencing a change of use,
- those facing major challenges to complying with modern codes, and/or
- those facing significant new construction and/or additions.

And they are authored by larger teams of professionals (such as an historic preservation professional/architectural historian, architect, engineer, general contractor, timber framer, expert in historic masonry, codes consultant, etc.).

Typical Outline for an Historic Structure Report:

- Table of Contents
- Introduction/Executive Summary
- Thorough History and Development of the Property and its context (designers, builders, owners, occupants, and others associated with its history and development) including a chronology, historic photographs, a Statement of Significance, and a bibliography
- Comprehensive Physical/Architectural Description (site, exterior, and interior; including site/floor plans, photographs of significant features, and an analysis of primary and secondary character-defining features)
- Conditions Assessment (site, exterior, and interior; including photographs detailing areas needing attention)
- Historic Preservation Objectives (rehabilitation, restoration, etc.)
- Requirements for Work (laws, regulations, and functional requirements)
- Recommendations for work (with short-, mid-, and long-range preservation needs and cost estimates for short-range projects), as well as recommendations for further studies, if appropriate
- Detailed reuse plan
- To-scale, measured architectural drawings of the structure as built and as proposed
- Appendices (can include previous reports, engineering assessments, determinations of eligibility, nominations to the National or State Register of Historic Places, Secretary of the Interior's Standards, a list of relevant Preservation Briefs, etc.)

Historic Building Assessments are shorter, cheaper, and less detailed. They are appropriate for:

- smaller structures,
- those with fewer problems,
- those not experiencing a change of use,
- those not facing major difficulties in complying with modern codes, and/or
- those not requiring significant new construction or new additions.

And they may be authored by two people (typically an historic preservation professional/architectural historian and an architect or general contractor).

Typical Outline for an Historic Building Assessment:

- Table of Contents
- Introduction/Executive Summary
- History and Development of the Property (including historic photographs)
- Statement of Significance
- Physical/Architectural Description (site, exterior, and interior; including sketch site/floor plans, photographs of significant features, and an analysis of Character-Defining Features)
- Conditions Assessment (site, exterior, and interior; including photographs detailing areas needing attention)
- Recommendations for work (with short-, mid-, and long-range preservation needs and cost estimates for short-range projects), as well as recommendations for further studies, if appropriate
- Appendices (can include previous reports, engineering assessments, determinations of eligibility, nominations to the National or State Register of Historic Places, Secretary of the Interior's Standards, a list of relevant Preservation Briefs, etc.)

Information about Historic Structure Reports, including a discussion on their content and organization, can be found here (<https://www.nps.gov/TPS/HOW-TO-PRESERVE/briefs/43-historic-structure-reports.htm>). When considering what to include in a preservation plan, it may be helpful to review this outline and then subtract those items that are not necessary. But don't cut too much, as doing so might reduce the utility of the report in the future. For example, a building steward focused on catching up on deferred maintenance might choose to limit the focus of a preservation plan to the existing historic fabric of the building; but if the building is not fully usable because of a variety of code issues, it might make sense to include an analysis of how to resolve those compliance problems in the report, too.