

# CHAPTER 8

## DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR ADAPTIVE REUSE



### Introduction

When adapting an historic structure to a new use, all of the other standards and guidelines for treatment of historic properties continue to apply. This chapter provides special direction on how those preservation principles relate when changing uses.

Be aware that a change in use may trigger compliance with other building and fire codes that could affect the historic character of a property. For example, changing a house to a commercial use may require fire separations that need special care in order to preserve the historic character. In a similar manner, complying with accessibility laws may require some changes. In such situations, seek alternative design solutions that will minimize the loss of historic building fabric and will avoid altering the historic character of the property.

### A. When adapting an historic structure to a new use, respect its historic character.

- 1) For example, when converting a residence to commercial use, maintain the overall residential character of the property.
- 2) This includes preservation of the key features of the building itself, as well as landscape and site design elements.



*When adapting an historic structure to a new use, respect its historic character.*

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References:

**B. Seek a use that is compatible with the historic character of the property.**

- 1) A use that is closely related to the original use is preferred. As an example, converting a residence to professional offices is relatively easy because exterior features can be maintained and even the interior floor plan is usually adaptable to an office layout.
- 2) A use that preserves the historic site design is also preferred. This may include the character of a front yard that is associated with an historic house.

**C. Minimize the impacts of complying with fire separation requirements.**

- 1) Seek alternative measures for complying that would preserve historic siding and structural systems. For example, consider using an external fire sprinkling system rather than replacing historic wood siding.



*Seek a use that is compatible with the historic character of the property.*

**D. Design accessibility improvements in a manner that will preserve the historic character of the property.**

- 1) Locate an access ramp, for example, in a way that preserves key features.

**E. Maintain the historic character of the manner in which a building orients to the street.**

- 1) For example, if an historic house is to be converted, preserve the historic relationship of a front yard with a walkway and stairs that lead to a front porch.

**F. When adapting historic landscapes and yards to new uses, also maintain the historic character.**

- 1) Preserve the general character of a modest, informal front yard with walkway, for example, rather than creating an overly decorative courtyard.
- 2) Develop a lighting design that is compatible with the historic character as well.

**G. Minimize the visual impacts of parking areas.**

- 1) Parking in a front yard is inappropriate.
- 2) See the guidelines in Chapter 10.

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**References:**

- ☞ See also the design guidelines for *Handicap Accessibility* in Chapter 10: Design Guidelines for Site Features.
- ☞ See also the design guidelines for *Residential Parking, Garages & Driveways* in Chapter 10: Design Guidelines for Site Features.