



## Subject: New Additions to Mid-size Historic Buildings

**Applicable Standards:**

2. Retention of Historic Character
9. Compatible New Additions/Alterations
10. Reversibility of New Additions

**Issue:** The rehabilitation of some historic buildings involves new construction creating an addition to the original building. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards require that such an addition be compatible with the historic building yet differentiated from it, and that the overall character of a property shall be preserved. Factors that affect the relationship of the addition to the original building are its size, placement, form and materials. However, because of the varied interplay between these factors, it not possible to establish specific criteria for each that will apply in all combinations even in the context of a particular historic building. The form and materials of an addition placed at the side of a building, for instance, might need to be quite different from those of an addition located at the rear. Moreover, each historic building presents a unique set of circumstances to which an addition must respond, and the rehabilitation of some historic buildings may not be able to accept any addition and still meet the Standards. Successful additions can result from quite varied design approaches, but common to most additions that meet the Standards are the general concepts of similarity and subordination.

**Application 1** (*Compatible treatment, Appropriate addition*): Constructed in 1914, this three-story apartment building was built to the front property line of its site. Architectural detailing in face brick and stone distinguish the facade from the plain side walls of common brick. The addition which is roughly half the size of the original building attaches along the full length of one of the plain, side elevations. The street elevation of the addition is in the same plane as the original facade, consistent with other buildings in the historic streetscape. Although similar in form and materials, the composition and details of the new facade are more simplified. The distinction between the old and the new is reinforced by a narrow recessed connector faced with a glass curtain wall. The size and placement of the connector prevent the glass and metal from becoming too sharp a contrast that would make the connector itself an incompatible feature.

The successful intersection of old and new continues on the interior where the character of the former exterior wall is preserved. The brick surface remains punctuated by the original window openings that have simply been infilled with painted panels. The size, and details of the addition make it distinctly subordinate to the original building, and its placement avoids obscuring any character-defining features.



*The slight recess at the intersection of the addition (left) and the historic facade (right) allows the visual mass of the original building to remain unchanged.*

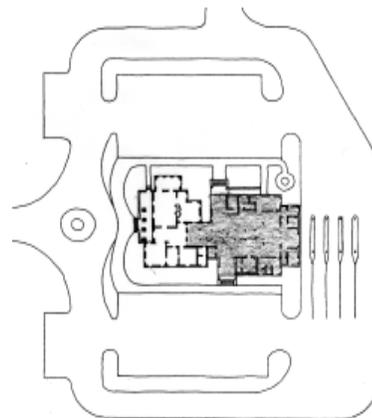
**Application 2** (*Incompatible treatment, inappropriate addition*): This freestanding Colonial Revival style house was built in 1928 on a large site that remains somewhat wooded. The proposed addition has a footprint nearly twice the size of the original building, which is far too large to be offset even by its location at the rear of the house. There is little in terms of design or proposed materials to distinguish the new construction from the original house. In addition the architectural elaboration of the two new side entrances makes them strong elements that diminish the importance of existing character-defining features. The historic setting is also altered by so large an addition as well as the extensive paving for drives and parking lots.



*Shown is the side of the historic house illustrated in the elevation (below, left).*



*Shown as shaded in the drawings, the relatively large size of the proposed addition is apparent. The plan view shows the vast expanse of paving.*



**Application 3** (*Compatible addition*): This small roadside hotel has been modified and expanded many times since its construction in 1853. The recent rehabilitation included another addition at the end of the rear wing. It is similar to the existing rear wing yet differentiated. Though the color is the same, the addition is stucco rather than brick. Windows are the same type and proportion, but the new ones have a simple lintel rather than a brick arch. The width of the addition and the slope of its roof match the rear wing but a small recessed connector separates the new from the old. The simplicity of the design and the location at the rear minimize the impact of this compatible addition.



*Rear of hotel showing original building (left), new addition and recessed connector.*



*The new addition is not visible from the front of the building.*

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These bulletins are issued to explain preservation project decisions made by the U.S. Department of the Interior. The resulting determinations, based on the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#), are not necessarily applicable beyond the unique facts and circumstances of each particular case.

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