



ACHP Policy Statement on Affordable Housing and Historic Preservation (1995)

The following policy statement on affordable housing and historic preservation was adopted by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) in 1995. It was replaced by a revised policy statement in 2006. Subsequently, in 2023, a new Policy Statement on Housing and Historic Preservation was adopted by the ACHP.

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) mandates preservation of the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation as a living part of community life and development in order to provide the American people with a sense of orientation.

It further states that increased knowledge about historic resources, establishment of a better means to identify and administer them, and encouragement of their preservation will not only improve planning and execution of Federal and federally assisted projects and but also assist economic growth and development.

Toward that end, NHPA directs the Federal Government to foster conditions under which modern society and and prehistoric and historic resources can exist in productive harmony and "fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations."

Federal agencies that assist in the construction and rehabilitation of housing, most notably the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Agriculture, are tasked with meeting Americans basic needs for safe, decent and affordable housing. Historic properties have played a vital role in fulfilling this objective; this must continue.

It is, however, important that Federal and State agencies, local governments, housing providers, and the preservation community in general actively seek ways to reconcile national historic preservation goals with the special economic and social needs associated with affordable housing, given that this is now one of the Nation's most pressing challenges.

In issuing this policy statement, ACHP seeks to promote a new, flexible approach toward affordable housing and historic preservation which is embodied in the following Implementation Principles. State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs), Federal and State agencies, and local governments involved in the administration of the Section 106 review process for affordable housing projects funded or assisted by Federal agencies are encouraged to use these principles as a framework for Section 106 consultation and local historic preservation planning.

ACHP also encourages HUD, in consultation with the national preservation community, including the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, the National Park Service, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, to develop comprehensive historic preservation training programs for HUD staff, State, county, and local officials, and housing providers who implement affordable housing projects.

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Such training should advance the Implementation Principles and the initiatives outlined in the Secretary of HUD's May 5, 1995, Historic Preservation Directive, focusing on:

1. improving coordination of Section 106 reviews;
2. evaluating the National Register eligibility of historic properties;
3. applying the Secretary's Standards;
4. providing technical assistance for routine maintenance and repairs to historic buildings;
5. developing financial packages for affordable housing projects; and
6. integrating historic preservation into Consolidated Plan Documents and local comprehensive plans.

Implementation Principles

1. Section 106 reviews for affordable housing projects should place principal emphasis on broad-based consensus reflecting the interests, desires, and values of affected communities, neighborhoods, and residents. Consensus-building should be facilitated through training, education, and consultation focused on historic preservation values, collaborative planning, and dispute resolution.
2. Identification of historic properties and evaluation of their eligibility for the National Register for Historic Places should include discussions with the local community and neighborhood residents to ensure that their views concerning architectural and historic significance and traditional and cultural values receive full consideration by the Federal agency, State, county, or local government, and the SHPO.
3. When assessing the effects of affordable housing projects on historic properties, consultation should focus not just on individual buildings which may contribute to a historic district but on the overall historic preservation potentials of the broader community, neighborhood, or "target area." This practice will ensure proper consideration is given to the cumulative impacts of projects within a designated area. Historic preservation issues should be related to social and economic development, housing, safety, and programmatic issues integral to community viability.
4. Plans and specifications for rehabilitation, new construction, and abatement of hazardous conditions associated with affordable housing projects should adhere to the recommended approaches in The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, when feasible. When economic or design constraints preclude application of the Standards, consulting parties may develop alternative design guidelines tailored to the district or neighborhood to preserve historic materials and spaces to the maximum extent feasible. Alternative guidelines shall be incorporated into executed Memoranda of Agreement or Programmatic Agreements.
5. Proposals for non-emergency demolitions of historic properties should include adequate background documentation to demonstrate to the SHPO and/or ACHP that rehabilitation is not economically or structurally feasible, or that retention of such properties would jeopardize the implementation of an affordable housing project.
6. The Section 106 review process for affordable housing rehabilitation projects and abatement of hazardous conditions should emphasize treatment of exteriors and be limited to significant interior features and spaces that contribute to the property's eligibility for the National Register, unless otherwise agreed to by all consulting parties.
7. Where appropriate, Section 106 reviews for affordable housing projects should be conducted in conjunction with the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits and other State and local administrative

reviews to ensure consistency of reviews and to minimize delays. When Section 106 reviews for affordable housing projects precede other related reviews, applicants who are seeking Historic Tax Credits are encouraged to seek the advice of the SHPO and to obtain early review by the National Park Service to assure final eligibility for the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit.

8. Archeological investigations should not be required for affordable housing projects which are limited to rehabilitation and require minimal ground disturbance activities.
9. State, county, and local governments are encouraged to develop Programmatic Agreements that promote creative solutions to implement affordable housing projects and to streamline Section 106 reviews through the exemption of categories of routine activities; the adoption of "treatment and design protocols" for rehabilitation and infill new construction; and the delegation of Section 106 reviews to qualified preservation professionals employed by the local community.
10. Certified local governments and/or communities that employ qualified preservation professionals, as set forth in The Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards should be allowed to conduct Section 106 reviews on behalf of ACHP and/or the SHPO for affordable housing projects when the local government and/or community has executed a Programmatic Agreement with ACHP and the SHPO.