



# PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

County Administration Building • 14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772  
pgplanning.org/HPC.htm • 301-952-3680

## HPC Policy #1-87

### EVALUATING INTEGRITY, DEGREE OF ALTERATION, AND SCARCITY AND FREQUENCY

#### A. Integrity

The property must possess sufficient integrity to convey, represent, or contain the values and qualities for which it is judged significant. "Sufficient" integrity will be judged by examining the degree of overall change in a structure's appearance, based on the number and quality of "detrimental" or "critical" (irreversible) changes. Although not always strictly quantifiable, the overall impact of both detrimental and critical changes should be discussed in the context of feasible or likely remediation that would enable the historic character and significance of a property to be recognizable.

1. Detrimental changes would be:

a. To chimneys:

New, relocated or removed chimney; the degree of detriment would depend on the location of the chimney (rear chimneys normally would be less significant), and the significance of the original chimney—for example, a large and ornate chimney would be more important and its removal more detrimental. A new chimney would be more detrimental if prominent or constructed with inappropriate materials.

b. To foundations:

Rebuilt foundation; the degree of change and significance of the original foundation are of importance. A foundation rebuilt to the original appearance would not normally be detrimental unless the original construction techniques were of great importance or rarity.

c. To porches:

Modern porch; the addition of a modern porch where one previously did not exist could be detrimental, depending on its design and materials, although the degree of detriment would not be great if the porch were located in an unobtrusive place (such as the rear) and constructed in a compatible manner. A replacement of a missing porch with one matching or compatible would not be detrimental, although this would not, of course, entirely restore a property's original integrity.

d. To windows:

- (1) Original windows changed at a later, but still historical date. Since the integrity of a building is evaluated with regard to its period of greatest significance, the degree of detriment of non-original windows would depend on how significant the later period was to the architecture of the house. Furthermore, the degree of detriment would depend on how different the newer windows were from the original.
- (2) Replacement window sash in original frames. This is less detrimental than a total replacement of the window unit. The degree of detriment would depend on the configuration of the new windows—the closer to the original, the less detrimental.
- (3) Original windows intact but extra ones added. The degree of detriment would depend on how and where the new openings were made. In general, the more obtrusive the new openings, the more detrimental (e.g., to the facade). Placement of the windows and, of course, their style would also be determining factors. A new window, of appropriate style and placed appropriately, or installed in a less significant or noticeable place, would have negligible detrimental impact.
- (4) Change in shape or size of window openings. Changes in the number of panes, the proportions and the size of the windows can be very detrimental, depending on the degree of change, and the specific windows involved.

e. Synthetic siding:

All synthetic siding may damage underlying material. Aluminum and vinyl are always detrimental in both appearance and in the potential to damage the original fabric. However, if original architraves and trim are retained, the detriment to appearance is lessened. If the style of the synthetic siding matches the original in width and shape, it will be less detrimental in appearance. Vinyl siding imitating wood grain is most inappropriate, as grain is usually not visible in painted wood.

Asphalt or asbestos siding is detrimental, its degree of detriment depending on the factors noted above. These materials are probably more easily reversed and hence may be less detrimental.

The presence of original siding under synthetic siding would indicate that the change could be reversed.

f. Interior changes:

Interior changes, although often necessary, are detrimental. They are usually less detrimental than exterior changes which are more public and obvious. The degree and appropriateness of the changes determines how detrimental they are.

2. Critical changes would be:

Those changes which by their nature are irreversible and which greatly alter or destroy the significant features of a building and/or its setting. Whether a change is in fact critical to a property's integrity and further to its historical value, depends on the degree of significance the structure has, the proportion of significant features remaining, whether the significance was dependent on a structure's architecture primarily, and the appropriateness of the changes. Examples of changes more likely to be critical are:

- a. Removal of original (or historic) wood siding before application of synthetic siding.
- b. Removal of decorative detail, such as cornice brackets and other trim.
- c. Change in the texture or proportions of the surface material, especially in cases where the style of the original siding was a factor in the architectural significance of the building.
- d. Additions engulfing or removing portions of the original building.
- e. Gross alteration of the facade through inappropriate window changes, door changes, and/or portico or porch changes.
- f. Removal of outbuildings that are considered essential to conveying the significance of the resource.
- g. Recent change of location, particularly when the siting of a resource helps to convey its significance because of the physical surroundings (being on a prominent hill, etc.), or through historic associations. Some changes in location are necessary to protect the structure or to enable its rehabilitation and are desirable even though they constitute a critical change.
- h. Alteration of the physical setting resulting in the loss of historical context, such as the development of agricultural land surrounding a historic resource. Occasionally, however, changes in surroundings can add to significance, in that they may leave the structure as the only remnant of the historical record.

Any of these changes may alter a building so completely that it may not be found to meet historic site evaluation criteria.

B. Degree of Alteration

When evaluating a property for historic site designation, staff shall report on the character and degree of detrimental and/or critical changes to the building and its setting, and the effect of these changes on the architectural, historical, and/or cultural significance of the property. A property should not be classified as an historic site if, for example, distinguishing features have been removed or irreversibly concealed, rendering the property less exemplary of a given style or period of architecture, or less representative of its historical or cultural significance.

C. Scarcity or Frequency

Scarcity shall be judged by knowledge of similar remaining structures and their representation in the Inventory of Historic Resources. If a property is the only example, or one of only a few remaining examples of its kind, judgment as to its integrity should be less restrictive than for historic resource types that are well represented in the Inventory.

If a historic resource type occurs frequently within a definable area that is being evaluated for historic district designation (e.g., a row of Victorian cottages), judgment as to the integrity of individual properties within that area should be less restrictive than if the property were to be evaluated on an individual basis.

Incorporated as part of

HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:  
EVALUATION CRITERIA, POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

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