Historic Districts in the Albina Community

Albina, Oregon 1889
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Historic Districts
in the Albina Community Plan

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Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Alberta Street, early 1900's
This area is a proposed historic ensemble.
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Photographs and Sketches courtesy of the following:

Oregon Historical Society

Entries in the Essential Housing Competition-
New House Designs for North/Northeast Portland

Sheila Frugoli and Julia Gisler-
Portland Planning Bureau
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I. Introduction: Historic Districts

Nominating an area as a historic district is a strategy for protecting its historic resources. Generally, the protection measures focus on guiding new development that is compatible with the desired historic characteristics of the district. In the city of Portland there are two types of districts. National Register Historic Districts, which are ultimately approved and administered by the State Historic Preservation Office, and local historic districts which are under the jurisdiction of the city of Portland. This document has been written to help residents and others interested in local historic districts understand the process and implications of creating a local historic district.

For historic preservation efforts to be successful there must be broad-based community support. It is important to inform people about the historic and architectural significance of their neighborhoods and districts. Residents, governmental agencies, financial institutions, utility companies, and others in positions to influence development in historic areas often do not realize the area’s significance and may make decisions that are destructive to the area’s character. Significant historic resources and their character-defining features need to be identified for each historic district. Then regulations, such as design review and demolition delay, can be put in place to protect them. There can also be incentives, such as tax abatements, low interest loans, and special zoning considerations, that make rehabilitation of historic structures more financially appealing. When both regulations and incentives are in place, areas can better accommodate new development without sacrificing their historic character.
Albina Community
Historic Resource Survey Project

The Portland Planning Bureau has received a survey and planning grant from the State Historic Preservation Office to support our historic preservation work in the Albina Community. As you know, the Albina Community has many wonderful historic neighborhoods and commercial districts. This project will increase our knowledge of the historic resources in the area so that future development decisions can be balanced with historic preservation priorities. The survey/planning grant has two parts:

- Update the 1984 Historic Resources Inventory. Are the structures still there? Have they been significantly altered? Is there additional information we can find on them?

- Survey the properties within the eight proposed historic districts and an area in the Sabin/King neighborhood (see attached map). Are the district boundaries correct? Should they be modified? What is the historical significance of the different districts? What are the architectural styles and physical characteristics of the districts?

This is a BIG project. We will be surveying over 3,000 properties and we need your help! Kimberly Demuth, historic preservation consultant of Demuth Glick Consultants LTD will lead a workshop to train volunteers in field survey and historic research. This is a great opportunity to participate in a neighborhood project and learn more about the history of your area at the same time!

Volunteer Survey Training Workshop
Place: King Facility- 4816 N. 7th Ave.
Date: Wednesday, Feb. 12, 1992
Time: 7:00-9:00 P.M.

If you have questions please contact Julia Gisler at the Planning Bureau at 736-7700. We can arrange for someone to talk at your neighborhood group.

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II. The Albina Community Plan and Historic Preservation Planning

Historic preservation planning is playing an important role in the development of the Albina Community Plan. Preservation planning establishes a historic context for an area that is used to develop goals and priorities for the identification, evaluation, and treatment of its historic properties. The results of preservation planning can be integrated into broader planning and development decisions within the area. As part of the Albina Community Plan, a historic context for the Albina community will be developed following the four steps outlined in the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office’s “Handbook to Historic Preservation Planning in Oregon”.

- **Historic overview.** A written narrative that provides information regarding the important historical trends, influences, and distribution of resources in the district.

  The Albina community is one of the oldest urban areas in the city of Portland. Located within its boundaries are a wealth of historic resources. A historic overview for the Albina community will be prepared by the Community Planning staff. This overview will establish the area’s historic development period and provide guidance on how to identify and protect significant historic resources. (See Appendix A: The Development of the Albina Community).

- **Identification.** This phase reviews previous surveys and/or conducts additional survey work in order to identify the important characteristics, conditions and distribution patterns of the area’s historic resources.

  The city of Portland’s 1978 Potential Historic Conservation Districts and 1984 Inventory of Historic Resources are the foundation of the Albina Community Plan’s historic preservation work. A significant part of this work will be to re-survey the properties within the Albina community listed on the Historic Resources Inventory and update this portion of the citywide inventory. (See flyer for volunteer survey workshop-opposite page)
**Evaluation.** The information from the historic overview and the results of the survey work are combined and analyzed to evaluate and rank historical resources.

As a part of the survey work, the resources identified will be evaluated for their significance by a working committee. Each property will be evaluated against the criteria established by the National Parks Service and National Register Program as well as more specific criteria derived from the Albina community's historic context statement.

**Treatment.** The treatment of historic resources defines strategies for their protection that will enhance preservation planning goals. The Portland Zoning Code has a number of provisions which protect historic resources. The most significant are: design review, design guidelines, and demolition delay. These are discussed in greater detail on page 9.

All properties on the Portland Historic Resources Inventory are protected by demolition delay. Most development proposals for properties with historical landmark status also require design review.

The most ambitious historic preservation proposal in the Albina Community Plan is the creation of eight local historic districts. If approved, these areas would be subject to demolition delay and design review. These potential historic districts are: Eliot, Irvington, Kenton, Mississippi, Mock’s Crest, Piedmont, Russell Street and Woodlawn. (See map of proposed local historic districts opposite page).

The Albina Community Plan staff will present the applications for the proposed local historic districts to the Landmarks and Planning Commissions, as part of the approval process for the Albina Community Plan. Staff will seek endorsement from the Landmarks and Planning Commissions for all the historic districts, as a group, in advance of the City Council hearings on the Albina Community Plan. The City Council must ultimately approve the districts.

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Platt Map of the city of Albina.
III. Advantages of Designating a Local Historic District

The following are reasons neighborhoods may want to support establishing a local historic design district:

- Increase neighborhood pride and identity and encourage private rehabilitation efforts;
- Protect desirable and unique physical features of neighborhoods;
- Prevent incompatible development, renovation, and redevelopment;
- Foster the revitalization and/or stability of the historic design district and its surroundings;
- Provide a focus for supportive capital improvements, such as street trees, sidewalk improvements, district gateways and street lights;
- Receive notification and recognition in policies and development programs that affect historic resources; and
- Receive special recognition from city and other governmental bodies and possibility of obtaining financial and technical assistance in neighborhood improvement projects.
Panes planted in parking strip.
Proposed Piedmont Historic District.
IV. Local Historic Preservation Tools

Historic preservation tools are the regulations in the city's zoning code designed to achieve its historic preservation goals. The most significant tools that apply in historic districts are design review, design guidelines and demolition delay. The Proposed Albina Community Plan is recommending several modifications to the city's zoning code that will affect the local historic districts proposed for the Albina community.

Design Review

All property in local historic districts has a design overlay zone which requires design review for certain development projects. Design review is used to ensure that development within a historic district protects and enhances the recognized special characteristics of the district.

Procedures and Fees

The Portland Zoning Code provides three kinds of land use procedures for a design review application; Type I, II, III. The Type III review process is not assigned to the Albina Community Historic Districts. However, if a Type I review is denied, reapplication may be made through a Type III procedure.

For all design reviews the application fee is 0.3% of the construction cost; however, the minimum and maximum fees will vary for each review. The Planning Director can grant application fee waivers to applicants that meet low-income criteria and to nonprofit organizations that directly serve low-income individuals. If certain criteria is met then neighborhood associations can appeal a design review decision free of charge.

For more information see the Portland Zoning Code, Chapter 23.750 FEES.
• **Type I Design Review** is an administrative procedure. There is no opportunity for local appeal of the decision. However, an applicant who’s Type I request has been denied may reapply through the Type III procedure. Notice of the project is mailed to all property owners within 100 feet of the lot and to recognized business and neighborhood associations. The minimum fee is $250. The maximum fee for a residential project is $750, for a nonresidential project the maximum fee is $1,500.

• **Type II Design Review** is also an administrative procedure, however, the decision can be appealed to the Landmarks Commission. Notices of the applicant’s proposal, and later the Planning Bureau’s decision, are mailed to property owners within 150 feet of the lot and to recognized business and neighborhood associations.

There is a two-tiered fee structure for Type II reviews. For nonresidential reviews on small projects such as signs and awnings the minimum fee is $100 and the maximum fee is $750. All other Type II reviews have a minimum fee of $750 and a maximum fee of $1,500.

• **Type III Design Review** is the most extensive type of design review. It requires a public hearing before the Landmarks Commission. Prior to the scheduled hearing, notices are sent to all property owners within 400 feet of the site and recognized business and neighborhood associations. The applicant must also post a public notice on the site. The decision of the Landmarks Commission may be appealed to the City Council by the applicant, the owner, or those who testified orally or in writing at the hearing.

The minimum fee is $1,500 and the maximum fee is $4,000.
Thresholds for Design Review

Each historic district has a design review threshold that determines if a proposed project must go through design review and, if so, what type. This threshold is based on the type of development, the value of the improvements and/or the square footage affected by the project. All the historic districts in the Albina community will have the same threshold.

Albina Community Historic Districts Design Review Threshold
For residential projects, new primary and accessory buildings and expansions of 500 square feet or more to existing primary buildings require a Type I design review. Other items do not require a design review.

For nonresidential projects, new development or exterior alterations which are valued over $200,000 in 1990 dollars require a Type II design review. All other exterior modifications valued under $200,000 will be reviewed as a Type I.
Design Guidelines

Design guidelines are the criteria used to evaluate development proposals during design review. Design guidelines are developed by identifying the features in a district that contribute to its special character. These are guides, rather than mandatory controls on new construction, exterior modifications, and public capital improvement projects. These guidelines must be considered, and applied, to both private and public actions within the district.

The design guidelines should express the shared understanding of what the people in the district feel is important to preserve and enhance. When design review is not required, the guidelines can help people design projects that are compatible with the surrounding buildings. Guidelines can also include a wide variety of suggestions that property owners can use to enhance their property value and contribute to the district’s desired character.

As part of the Albina Community Plan a single set of design guidelines will be developed for all historic districts. This document, Albina Community Design Guidelines, can be obtained from the Portland Planning Bureau. Also, as a design guide the Portland Chapter of the American Institute of Architects has prepared a set of design guidelines for housing in the Albina community. This document, The Ten Essentials for North/Northeast Portland Housing, outlines elements that should be considered when remodeling or constructing new housing in the Albina Community Plan area. The ideas covered in the “10 Essentials” have been incorporated into the Albina Community Design Guidelines.

Both documents are available from the Portland Bureau of Planning, Community Planning Section, 1120 SW Fifth Avenue, Room 1062, Portland, Oregon 97204.
Demolition Delay

Under the planning and zoning code there is an automatic 150 day demolition delay period for all buildings in historic districts. During this time the Planning Director can initiate a demolition review which will determine whether it is desirable and economically feasible to pursue the renovation of the site. The demolition delay gives the City and interested parties time to inform the owner of potential rehabilitation programs and benefits. It also allows the City to consider pursuing public acquisition and restoration of the building.

For more information see Portland Zoning Code, Chapter 33.222, DEMOLITIONS.
V. Local Historic District Administration

The application for the local historic districts must be reviewed by the Landmarks Commission and the Planning Commission with final approval by the City Council. Once the district is established it is administered by the Landmarks Commission and a Historic Design District Advisory Board.

Historical Landmarks Commission

The Portland Landmarks Commission is a voluntary body consisting of eight members; seven of which are appointed by the mayor and approved by the City Council and one who is a member of the Portland City Planning Commission. The Bureau of Planning serves as staff to the Landmarks Commission. The Commission provides leadership and expertise on maintaining and enhancing Portland’s historic and architectural heritage. The Landmarks Commission reviews nominations for historic districts and recommends their establishment or denial to the Planning Commission and the City Council. The Landmarks Commission also must approve the design guidelines that apply for each local historic district. Once the district is established the Landmarks Commission will be the review body that conducts Type III design review within the historic districts.

Historic District Nomination Process with the Albina Community Plan
Local Historic District Administration

Historic District Design Advisory Board

The Portland Zoning Code currently requires each historic district to establish a Historic District Design Advisory Board (HDDAB). This board will provide technical expertise and advice to the Landmarks Commission on whether proposed new development within the district is consistent with the district’s design guidelines. Members of the HDDAB may also be available to informally consult with property owners about proposed changes to their structures or property that do not require design review.

The Proposed Altina Community Plan recommends the creation of a single HDDAB for historic districts that are created as part of a community plan. This board would be composed of two citizens-at-large appointed by the mayor, a member of the Historical Landmarks Commission, and one person selected by the Landmarks Commission and approved by the mayor from each of the historic districts within the community plan. Members appointed to serve from historic districts where at least 50 percent of the structures are residential must reside in the historic district they were appointed to represent. A single advisory board is recommended for the following reasons. It would:

- Facilitate the creation of the districts;

- Make administration of design review easier and more consistent;

- Foster communication between the various neighborhoods containing historic districts;

- Assure that interest and participation in the advisory boards is high; and

- Maintain the understanding of each district’s contribution to the city and their relationship to each other.

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VI. Application for a Local Historic District

The following information outlines the materials necessary for complete local historic district nomination application. The Albina Community staff will work with interested people to develop the applications for the eight proposed historic districts.

Historical Background
This is a written statement that illustrates the historical and architectural significance of the district. It also justifies the boundary and describes the physical characteristics of the district. This narrative provides a synthesis of the researched historical information. The context statement includes the following four parts.

Historical Significance and Development Patterns

A comprehensive narrative that covers the history of the area and distinguishes important development patterns, trends, events, and cultural values. This section will identify the area's historic development period. Generally this is the period that established the district as we see it today. Some questions to ask when preparing this section:

- What are the historical trends in the settlement and development of the area?
- When was the area originally platted or subdivided?
- What are the important uses? Have they changed over the years?
- How have technological advancements impacted the district?
- Who are the individuals or groups that have influenced the area?
- When did the district look similar to the way it looks today? When were the streets built, the buildings constructed, and street furniture put in place?
Types of Historic Resources

Historic resources link the ideas incorporated in the historical background with actual historic properties that illustrate these ideas. Common examples of historic resource types in the Albina community would include: residential structures, streetcar era commercial structures, alley, churches, parks, street trees, and sidewalk horse rings. This section also describes the architectural character and significance of the district. Some questions to ask when preparing this section:

- What resource types relate to the historical background? (e.g. turn of the century residential structures in a streetcar suburb / cast stone construction in the Kenton District).
- What are the environmental or social factors that influenced the location of the different property types?
- Is there a dominant architectural style? Type of building?
- Are there many examples of this type of architecture in the city?
- Are there particular resources which are associated with an ethnic or religious group?
Relationship to Other Albina Community Historic Districts

There are eight potential historic districts in the Albina Community Plan. When these districts are combined they illustrate the development of the Albina community and its significance to the city of Portland and the state of Oregon. As a group the districts represent many styles of architecture, land uses, and stages of urban development. The proposed districts include independent settlements, a company town, streetcar suburbs, and post World War development. Because of the broad scope of knowledge of the Albina community required to address this section, it may be necessary to consult with Albina Community Plan staff. Some questions to ask when preparing this section:

- Chronologically, where does the district fit into the development of the Albina community. Was it an early development? Or a later one?
- How is the district unique from the other districts? How is it the same?

(Consider: land uses, types of historic resources, landscape treatments, role of ethnic and religious groups, and architectural styles.)

The Boundary of the District

The proposed historic district boundaries were identified in the 1978 Potential Historic Conservation Districts and included as part of the 1984 Historic Resources Inventory. There may be some districts where the boundary needs to be reviewed and possibly modified. Regardless of whether or not the boundary has been changed from the one proposed in 1978, the application needs to describe and justify the district boundaries. There are several factors to consider when making this evaluation.

- What are the original plat boundaries? Do they correspond with the concentration of significant historic resources?
- Where are there changes in land use, age of structures, architectural style, setbacks or street patterns that mark a change in character of the district?
- What new information has been discovered from the re-evaluation of the 1984 Historic Resources survey?

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Evaluation of Structures

The context statement will define the district's historic development period. This period is distinguished by fundamental changes in political, economic, or social conditions. Once a historic development period is defined all the structures within the district will fall into one of the following categories. These categories are from the National Register for Historic Districts Program.

- **Contributing.** Buildings constructed during the historic development period that have not been significantly altered and contribute to the district's historic character.

- **Historic/Non-Contributing.** Buildings constructed during the historic development period that have been altered so that they no longer contribute to the district's historic character.

- **Compatible/Non-Contributing.** Buildings constructed after the historic development period whose design is compatible with the district. However, because of their late building date they receive a non-contributing status.

- **Non-Compatible/Non-Contributing.** Buildings constructed after the historic development period whose design is not compatible with the district.

Once the building categories have been determined, a map will be prepared that shows the district's boundaries, the footprint of each building and its assigned category.

(See map of Lair Hill Conservation District opposite page).

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Sketch view from pedestrian's perspective
Piedmont Proposed Historic District.
Illustrations

Photographs and/or drawings are important to show the character of the district and illustrate what makes it special. When taking pictures or drawing sketches one should ask:

- What does a typical view down a street look like? From the perspective of a pedestrian? From the perspective of a motorist?
- Are there different subareas within the historic district that need to be illustrated?
- What are the dominant types of architecture? (Include examples of the different types of architecture found throughout the district).
- What are the elements that are key to the district’s historic character? (Such as large residential homes, storefront commercial buildings, street trees, planted parking strips, horse rings in the curb, street spatial patterns, etc.)

For more information contact the Portland Bureau of Planning, Community Planning Section at 796-7700.
WHAT IS A HISTORIC DISTRICT?

National Register Historic District brochure from the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office.

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VII. National Register of Historic Places

On completion of the Albina Community Plan the historic districts will have local status. We are aware that some districts may wish to also seek National Historic Register designation. Local designation is often the first step towards achieving National Register status. In addition to the local inventory which categorizes structures into contributing, historic non-contributing, compatible/non-contributing, and non-compatible/non-contributing, a National Register nomination requires more information on each structure. Additional information includes such items as a statement of significance, building construction, and a photograph and site plan.

(See Appendix B: Albina Community field survey form).

Buildings in historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places are potentially eligible for several financial benefits, including the State Special Assessment Program, where the true cash value of a property is frozen for fifteen years. It is important to note that this tax freeze provision will sunset in the 1994 Legislature and it is possible that it will not be extended. Other benefits include investment credits for major rehabilitation of income-producing properties and charitable deductions for donations of conservation easements.

National Register listing does not mean any additional regulations of a building, unless one is taking advantage of one of the tax incentives. Infill construction would be regulated according to local design guidelines and design review thresholds. Properties placed on the Special Assessment Program are subject to review by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in consultation with the District Advisory Board. The SHPO uses the Secretary of Interior's Standards when reviewing proposed exterior or interior modifications. (See Appendix C) To qualify for the program, a building must be at least rated as a contributing building in the district. Some non-contributing buildings may also qualify if modifications are made to restore original architectural integrity. There is also a requirement that owners of buildings placed on the Special Assessment Program open their buildings to the public at least once a year.

For more information contact the State Historic Preservation Office in Salem, 525 Trade Street SE, Salem, Oregon 97301, phone at 378-5001.

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Appendix

Appendix A:  
The Development of the Albina Community

Appendix B:  
Albina Community Field Survey Form

Appendix C:  
The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation
Appendix A: The Development of the Albina Community

The Albina Community in one of the oldest urban areas in the Portland metropolitan area. There are many buildings, neighborhoods, and districts remaining today which reflect earlier periods of time. The Albina Community Plan area has eight potential historic districts within its boundaries. As a collection these historic districts illustrate the evolution of the development of the Albina community.

The proposed historic districts can be divided into three major development periods. First, the development associated with the independent city of Albina before its consolidation with Portland. The next stage of development is characterized by the influence of the electric streetcar. Finally, the widespread use of the automobile shaped the development that occurred after World War II.

Albina
The original town site of Albina platted in 1872 was close to the waterfront on the east side of the Willamette River. Before its consolidation with Portland and East Portland in 1891, the city of Albina was one of many independent river towns along the Willamette River. In 1882, Albina became the western terminus of the Oregon Railway & Navigation Company’s line that ran from The Dalles to the banks of the Willamette River and connected with Portland via ferry. The railroad stimulated a flurry of industrial, commercial and residential development. Albina consisted of three areas: the low-lying riverside land developed as industrial land to serve the railroads; the central commercial strip developed along Russell Street; and, the adjoining residential areas on the hillside to the east. Today there are remnants of these areas. The railroad continues to dominate the uses along the riverfront. The Russell Street Historic District is the main commercial street of the town. The Elliot Historic District is a collection of early Victorian houses of the residential district.

The oldest settled area in the Albina Community is the proposed Woodlawn Historic District. Woodlawn was initially settled in the 1860’s as a rural farming village. It was the only independent town that existed outside of the city of Albina. Woodlawn’s character changed dramatically 1888 when the railroad, running from Portland to Vancouver, located a train station in the center of the village. This connection to a larger market stimulated development. The commercial uses centered around the train station with residential surrounding.
Streetcar Era
The street car era was the most significant to the early development of the Albina Community. Many of the land use patterns that we see today have their origins in this period. The first electric streetcar in the Portland area was in the city of Albina. It ran in a loop from the newly constructed Steel Bridge up Interstate Avenue, east on Stanton and down Williams Avenue where it joined back into Interstate. The heart of the proposed Mississippi Historic District contains a selection of the commercial and industrial buildings that grew along that Mississippi street car line, an extension of the Interstate-Stanton-Williams loop. Along with increasing commercial development opportunities, the streetcar lines also encouraged residential development. The streetcars allowed easy movement from Albina to jobs in downtown Portland and nearby industrial areas along the Columbia Slough and the Willamette River. While housing for all types of income were built in Albina, the proposed Irvington Historic District and Piedmont Historic District were subdivisions that were developed as upper-middle income exclusive residential areas.

Although the Kenton neighborhood was always a part of Portland, it was modeled after a company town. Swift and Company, know locally as Union Meat, opened a plant in Kenton along the Columbia Slough in 1909. The proposed Kenton Historic District centers along the commercial strip on Denver Avenue. Swift and Company built a private streetcar line along Denver Avenue that ran north to the meatpacking plant. On both sides of Denver Avenue are the surviving housing of the industrial workers and Swift and Company executives.

The Automobile
As the 1930s began, the street car era was drawing to a close. The automobile became increasingly affordable to the general public and substantially influenced the development of the city. This transition from streetcar to automobile starts the period of decline for many of the commercial strips that grew up along streetcar lines and were unable to adapt to the needs of the automobile. Mock's Crest Historic District is the most recently developed proposed historic district in the Albina community. It was an exclusive subdivision built after World War II. Interestingly, the architecture of the houses were designed to look like styles of an earlier period.
Appendix C: The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.

6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than be replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

8. Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.