

# Historic Preservation Commission

Prince George's County, Maryland

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## 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 of the "detrimental" or "critical" (irreversible) changes.*

#### 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 actual construction techniques were of great importance or rare.*

##### 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 suitable would not be detrimental, although this would not, of course, entirely restore the original integrity.*

d. *To windows:*

- (1) *Original windows changed at a later, but still historical date. Since buildings are evaluated as to their integrity relating to their period of greatest significance, the degree of detriment 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.*
- (2) *Modern windows in original frames. This is less detrimental than a total replacement. 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 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 seriously detrimental, depending on the degree of change, and the specific windows involved.*

e. *Synthetic siding:*

- (1) *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 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 artificial siding would indicate that the change could be reversed.*

- (2) *When evaluating for Historic Site status a building which is sheathed with synthetic siding, staff shall report on the degree of detrimental or critical change to the building, and its effect on the architectural significance of the building. A building should not be classified as an Historic Site if, for example, distinguishing features are removed or concealed, rendering the building less exemplary of a given style or period of architecture.*

- f. *Lack of outbuildings:  
Removal of outbuildings lessens integrity of the entire site, although not of the house or building itself. Some types of sites gain a great deal of significance from outbuildings.*
  - g. *Recent change of location (historical moves may be significant):  
  
The siting of some historic sites may be very significant, either because of the physical surroundings (being on a prominent hill, etc.), or through historic associations. The degree of detriment depends on the importance of the historic site. Some changes in location are necessary to protect the structure or to enable its rehabilitation; such moves are desirable even though they are in and of themselves somewhat detrimental to the historic integrity.*
  - h. *Isolation from its original context (loss of historical setting):  
  
Farm buildings without their agricultural landscape or a house surrounded by apartment buildings would lose some integrity. Occasionally, however, changes in surroundings can add to significance, in that they may leave the structure as the only remnant of the historical record.*
  - i. *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.  
  
Several of these detrimental changes may significantly alter the structure's overall appearance, depending on the quality of its original character.*
2. *Critical changes in general are those which are irreversible, which greatly alter the structure, and which destroy more significant features. Whether a change is in fact critical to its 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 the 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.*

*Any of these changes may alter a building so completely that it should be eliminated from the inventory.*

B. Degree of Alteration

*When evaluating a building for Historic Site status, staff shall report on the degree of detrimental or critical change to the building, and its effect on the architectural significance of the building. A building should not be classified as an Historic Site if, for example, distinguishing features are removed or concealed, rendering the building less exemplary of a given style or period of architecture.*

C. Scarcity or Frequency

*Scarcity would be judged by knowledge of other similar remaining structures. If a structure is the only example, or one of only a few remaining examples of its kind, judgment as to its significance and integrity would be less severe than for historic resource types that occur frequently. Whereas scarcity might have more weight for site designations, frequency (e.g., a row of Victorian cottages) could add to the integrity of a historic district.*

Incorporated as part of

HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:  
EVALUATION CRITERIA, POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

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