

Don't Remuddle, Rehabilitate!

Construction Strategies for Historic Buildings

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We've all seen it. Something just doesn't look right about that old house or building, but it's tough to articulate the incongruous elements.

If it's your building, however, there are different strategies to take to make it work for you. The National Park Service is helping with their book, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, which offers four approaches for consideration for a historic place that needs some attention.

Preservation is the approach that focuses on the maintenance of the property, repair

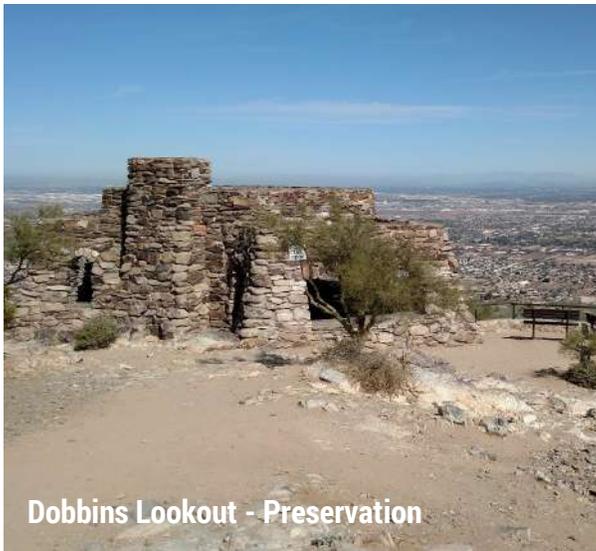
of existing historic materials, and retention of a property's form as it has evolved. An example is Dobbins Lookout at South Mountain Park in Phoenix that was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. The lookout appears similar today as it did when originally built.

Rehabilitation is the most common approach utilized. The goal here is to alter or add to a property to meet the continuing or changing uses while retaining the historic character of the property. An example is the DeSoto Central Market at Central Avenue and Roosevelt Street in Phoenix. This vacated car dealership was adaptively

reused to house some vendors and an event space but still maintains the character-defining features of the original building.

Restoration is the approach that depicts a property at a particular period while removing evidence of other timespans. A good example is the L. Ron Hubbard House near Camelback Mountain. A walk through this residence is like going back in time to the 1950s.

Reconstruction is an approach that re-creates a historic building or feature for interpretive purposes. The reconstruction is based on documentation or physical evidence, not conjecture. The Zane Grey Cabin was reconstructed in Payson in 2003 after having been destroyed by The Dude forest fire in Tonto Basin in 1990. The cabin helps communicate the life of this successful writer of 64 Western novels written from 1903 until his death in 1939.



Dobbins Lookout - Preservation



DeSoto Central Market - Rehabilitation



L. Ron Hubbard House - Restoration



Zane Grey Cabin - Reconstruction

Images courtesy of Author

Each of the approaches has standards to follow that would avoid the mishaps that sometimes occur when owners are unaware of appropriate treatments for historic properties. For more information about these four approaches and how to maintain the integrity of a historic property, see [nps.gov/tps/standards/four-treatments.htm](https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/four-treatments.htm).

If standards for building rehabilitation are not followed, what occurs is termed "remuddling." The character and integrity of the building are lost through inappropri-

ate changes. Additions that overwhelm the original portion of the structure are, at best, distracting. Removing or covering character-defining features destroy the historical value of the property.

Some owners falsely believe that the latest improvement fad will add value to a building. One frequent example of remuddling is the replacement of original windows with inferior products. Old windows will last much longer if properly maintained, and there are inexpensive methods to make them more energy effi-

cient. Any doubts about the value of steel casement windows are erased upon learning of the high cost of having them recreated or purchased in a vintage furniture store.

Take note which old buildings have maintained their integrity in your area. These structures add a sense of authenticity and a sense of place that make a city special. Hopefully, if you ever own a historic property, a passer-by will say, "Isn't she a beaut! They know how to treat a lady."

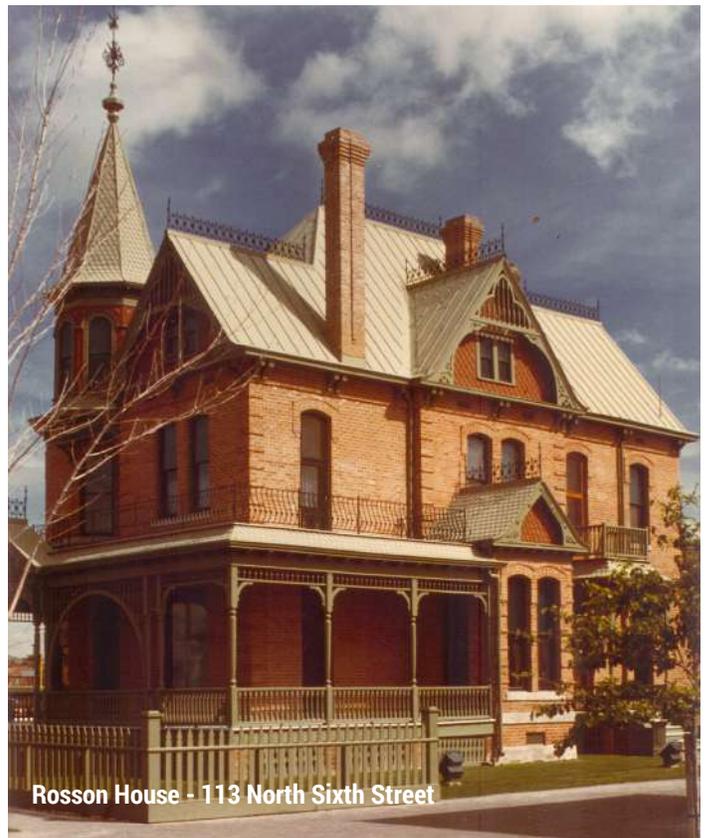
Test your skills in recognizing which approach: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration or reconstruction was taken on the historic buildings below: The answers are on the following page.



Kunz-Carbajal House - 1721 South Seventh Avenue



Tucson Presidio - 150 West Alameda Street



Rosson House - 113 North Sixth Street



The Van Buren - 401 West Van Buren

Answers - How did you do in recognizing each approach?

The Van Buren - Rehabilitation
Dud R. Day Motor Company - Phoenix
Motor Company



Kunz-Carbajal House - Preservation



Rosson House - Restoration



Tucson Presidio - Reconstruction Original
Sketch by Don Ryden



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