



ARCHITECTURAL ASSESSMENT CHECK LIST

The architectural assessment of a building begins with a coordinated look at the site, the building and the applicable building codes and standards that apply. Each of these factors will come into play in the design and construction of a renovation. Some items will ultimately be more important than others in arriving at an appropriate design and in determining the economic feasibility, but all should be investigated. Thoroughness at the beginning of the process will help minimize the risk of “unknowns” that make renovation more risky than new construction. Knowing and understanding the regulatory variables that apply to a renovation are equally important to knowing the physical attributes.

The following check list is a summary of some of the most common site, building, and regulatory attributes that come into play in working on older downtown buildings. This list highlights the essential information needed for a feasibility study, which will link together the architectural and economic options. As with any attempt to make a “complete” list, there are probably other items that could be included based upon the many different sites and buildings around the country. Owners, builders, and architects are encouraged to use this list for their individual projects. Community developers, downtown professionals and preservation advocates are encouraged to use the list to determine areas where that they can improve the local policies to provide reinvestment.

Property Classification

Location and site

Street address

Public highway (Curb cuts, site access)

City, State Zip County

Lot size, (survey or not)

Setbacks, Rear lot

Zero lot line?

Zoning classification

Parking requirement

No on-site requirement?

Historic District



- Main Street area
- Special districts
 - TIF, SSA, Enterprise zone,

- Environment: Location
 - Flood plain
 - Seismic zone

- Utilities
 - Elec.
 - Gas
 - Water (size & pressure re: sprinklers)
 - Sewer (interior and exterior connection)
 - Telephone
 - Cable
 - Internet (broadband?)
 - Waste pick-up

Building classification

- Size
- Area
- Number of floors (vertical height)
- Construction type (building code)
- Structural system
 - Adequacy evaluation
- Architectural attributes that are code “triggers”
 - Number of building exits
 - Access to light and ventilation
- Use (relates to both zoning and building code)
- Current use
 - First floor
 - Upper floors
- Historic use (city directory, Sanborn map)
 - (Last known legal use?)

Historic Classification

- Architectural style description
- Historic classification:
 - Designated or eligible?
- Historical use (city directory, Sanborn map)
- Architectural/Historical significance
 - Facades
 - Interiors

Architectural evaluation:

Roof

- Public visibility
- Slope (low slope is typical)
- Condition/warranty
- Structural system adequacy
- Gutters and downspouts

Façades (architectural and historical significance)

- Primary (street elevations, preservation priority)
- Secondary (some public visibility)
- Tertiary (rear and courtyard elevations)
- Rear porch/exit

Interiors

- Primary or formal space (store, entry, public hall, living room)
- Secondary space (bedrooms)
- Tertiary (basement, attic, lightwell)
- Warehouse, storage room
- Altered spaces (kitchens)

Noteworthy features/conditions

- Floor to floor height
- Potential for exterior space
- Rear deck
- Roof deck
- Finished or exposed masonry (* this is a special preservation topic)

Attributes that have special design and/or preservation value

- Tall ceiling heights
- Intact architectural features
- Skylight
- Fireplace
- Interior trim

Environmental: Hazardous materials

- Asbestos
- Lead Paint
- Underground storage tanks
- Environmental Assessment, Phase I
- Mold

ARCHITECTURAL ASSESSMENT: WEB RESOURCES

Illinois Historic Resources

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

www.illinois-history.gov

Illinois State Historic Preservation Office

<http://www.state.il.us/HPA/ps/index.htm>

National Park Service (NPS)

NPS Heritage Preservation Services Home Page

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps>

NPS Technical Preservation Services for Historic Buildings

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/index.htm>

Check List for Historic Building Rehabilitation

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/checklist.htm>

NPS Preservation Briefs

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm>

NPS Preservation Tech Notes

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/technotes/tnhome.htm>

NPS Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/rhb/index.htm>

NPS Technical Preservation Services Publications Catalog

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/tpscat.htm>

NPS Technical Preservation Services - Learn the Rehab Standards

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/e-rehab/>

NPS Technical Preservation Services – Incentives

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/incentives/index.htm>

Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program

Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/index.htm>

Historic Preservation Certification Application

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/hpcappl.htm>

Tax Act Project Status
<http://tps.cr.nps.gov/status>

General Service Administration (GSA) Technical Preservation database

GSA Technical Preservation
<http://w3.gsa.gov/web/p/hhttp.nsf?OpenDatabase>

Environment: Location

Seismic Zone Identification

Illinois Emergency Management Agency
http://www.state.il.us/iema/Prep/earth_zonemap.htm

Building Seismic Safety Council
<http://www.bssconline.org/pubs/safety2.html>

Flood Plain

Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs)
<http://www.fema.gov/fhm/tsdindex.shtml>

Note: Flood Insurance Rate Maps are maintained by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Maps can be ordered through FEMA and its regional offices. Many local planning authorities are placing the maps on-line for their area. There are also quite a few private for-profit sites that have digital versions of the FIRMs available for a fee.

Environment: Hazard Assessment

Asbestos:

Illinois Department of Public Health
Environmental Health Dept.
535 West Jefferson Street
Springfield, Illinois 62761
Phone 217-782-4977
<http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/asbestos.htm>

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
<http://www.epa.state.il.us/air/asbestos/>

Notification of demolition and renovation:
<http://www.epa.state.il.us/air/asbestos/asbestos-form.pdf>

Lead Paint:

Lead Paint: IDPH guide to programs and standards
<http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/leadforms.htm>

Lead Paint Safety: A field guide for painting, maintenance and home renovation work
<http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead/training/LBPguide.pdf>

Lead Paint disposal guidelines

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
<http://www.epa.state.il.us/chemical-safety/lead-based-paint/analysis-disposal.html>

Environmental Assessment Process

A guide to the Phase I Environmental Assessment
<http://www.enterprisefoundation.org/resources/dss/singlefam/sf&24&in&nc&ss&lg&rin&rc&ucpscm18.htm>

Leaking Underground Storage Tanks

LUST: Leaking Underground Storage Tanks
<http://www.epa.state.il.us/land/lust/transfer-to-srp/fact-sheet.html>