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 ZipCounty
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/cheklist.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

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.shtm

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

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

Leaking Underground Storage Tanks

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