

# Standards and Guidelines for Conservation of Historic Places in Canada

- On line and invaluable for all of us
- Result of years of federal/provincial collaboration on heritage philosophy and practice
  - Primary reference in decision making in our practice with municipal, provincial or federal buildings
  - Amalgam and interpretation of (but not the replacement for) guidance provided by the ICOMOS Charters (Venice Charter, Burra Charter, Appleton Charter)
- Doesn't replace obligations to conservation provided by the Provincial Ontario Heritage Act, the municipal Official Plans, the Provincial Planning Act, etc
  - It is a reference standard
- Ontario Building Code and the Federal Building Code supersede its guidance

## Standards and Guidelines: Chapter 1

### “The Conservation Decision Making Process”:

- it is a step by step, logical process described as
- ‘**understanding** the historic place’ **then**,
- ‘**planning**’ for the historic place **then**,
- ‘**intervening** through maintenance, through rehabilitation, or restoration’

This **three step process** is one that is accepted as the baseline for all appreciation, interpretation, care and work on historic sites in Canada, in the United States, in Britain and Australia as outlined by the excellent body of writing and regulations that have been created for sites like ours in the last 20 years

# Understanding

The heritage value and character –defining elements of a historic place

- Essential first step before any activity
- Sometimes /often described in a Statement of Heritage Value or Statement of Significance prepared by the municipality, province or federal governments or agencies
- **If there is no Statement** one should ALWAYS be prepared by experts in heritage conservation (historians, planners, archaeologists, architects, landscape professionals) for any property going through the process of change for barrier free upgrade.....whether required by law, or not
- **Without a thorough, accepted and considered understanding of heritage character, the decision making process for change has no foundation**

## **Why is Barrier Free Access Important to the Continued Life of Heritage Places?**

- Accessibility better guarantees the long-term and wise use of heritage resources
- Access to our public environment, and our cultural environment is a human right
- It is our right to access the distinct and valued environments that our culture has made
- It is our social responsibility to provide access to one and all / not to exclude some people
- It is often the law

# What are we trying to Preserve when we Alter A Historic Place to Provide Barrier Free Access?

- Heritage Value: the aesthetic, historic, scientific, cultural, social or spiritual significance for past, present and future generations
- Heritage Value: in its character defining materials, form, spaces, use and cultural association or meaning (which must be preserved)

# How do we work through the Heritage and Barrier Free Requirement Process Simultaneously?

- Identify heritage value and character defining elements
- Define the requirements of the barrier free project
- Consult legislation, guidelines and regulation relating to HERITAGE as well as to legal requirements for barrier free standards (municipal, provincial and federal)
  
- Prepare the project requirements
- Follow the building code and barrier free legislation in writing a project brief
- Follow the brief
- Prepare **multiple** design OPTIONS that suit the project heritage and barrier free requirements
- **Consult others** to determine the BEST option by seriously assessing
  - ❖ Heritage impact
  - ❖ thoroughness of provision for access
  - ❖ Longevity of solution for future needs
  - ❖ Cost effectiveness
  - ❖ Public good

# Standards and Guidelines for Conservation of Historic Places in Canada: The Standards

There are 13 Standards that govern conservation in terms of Preservation, Rehabilitation, and Restoration

- Use the gentlest means possible when preserving or intervening
- Respect the heritage value of the resource
- Maintain character defining elements
- Make interventions in a way that they are physically and visually compatible with character defining elements on close inspection

All these standards govern work when you are considering altering a historic place to add barrier free provisions

# Standards and Guidelines for Conservation of Historic Places in Canada: The Guidelines

The **Guidelines** provide direction on how to conserve or change a historic place

- Presumes you have already UNDERSTOOD and DOCUMENTED the resource
- Acknowledges that we must often address the need to alter or add to a property for reasons of :
  - ❖ Health
  - ❖ Safety
  - ❖ Security
  - ❖ Accessibility
  - ❖ Sustainability

## Accessibility : highest level of access and lowest level of impact on the heritage resource

- 'Providing for people of all ages, interests and abilities...
- generally the solution that best balances the accessibility needs with heritage value are those that enhance the use and appreciation of a historic place for everyone ...
- Work should be carefully planned and undertaken so that impact on the historic place is minimized...
- highest level of access / lowest level of impact...'

## Consult Users: Never forget this step

- “to determine the most appropriate solutions, accessibility and conservation specialists and USERS should be consulted early in the planning process”



# Ontario Building Code

- Complex as it relates to the renovation of heritage buildings that are recognized under the Ontario Heritage Act
- For the purposes of today's understanding it is important to note that NEW buildings are governed by the Building Code in a different way than EXISTING buildings
- There is generally no requirement to change a building that is safe and conforming to requirements of property standards
- UNLESS you are CHANGING THE USE OF A BUILDING even if you are not physically altering it (for example from a house to a museum) Part 10)
- OR if you are adding an addition to the building (Part 11)
- If you are changing the USE of a building, you must maintain or improve its performance for the major occupancy of the building in terms of public safety, access and other considerations
- If you are adding to the building you can leave the existing building 'as is' in most cases if the use is the same and you are not increasing occupancy, but the addition you are making must comply to the current Ontario Building Code
- This importantly for us, applies to any additions that are made to the site, to the building entrances, to the building interior, that relate to ACCESSIBILITY UPGRADES
- Some municipalities have rules that are even more strenuous than OBC or Agency and Provincial Requirements.

# Extensive Renovations

**The Ontario Building Code also regulates the provision of access to new buildings and extensive renovations of buildings with regard to**

- Parking
- Building Entrances
- Circulation routes, ramps, elevators
- Power door operators
- Way finding and signage
- Notification of fire and security alarms
- Barrier free washrooms and universal washrooms
- Accessible seating in public areas
- Lighting
- Heights of counters, guards, fire alarm pull stations, drinking fountains, etc.

**These provisions are also regulated through the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)**