

Historic Hawai'i Foundation Preservation Brief No. 1

PROVIDING ADA ACCESS TO HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Secretary of the Interior Standard: Rehabilitation

Additions to Historic Structures for Accessibility

It is important to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that people with disabilities are provided access to historic resources. Historic buildings, especially those originally constructed without elevators can pose challenges to adaptive re-use projects and current ADA Codes. Yet, this should not be a barrier to the continued use of a historic building. Creating accessible space while retaining the historic integrity of the structure can both be accomplished through the guidance of two resources. The Secretary of Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: Rehabilitation, and the National Park Service's Technical Preservation Brief #32: Making Historic Properties Accessible.

New construction to a historic structure to comply with ADA codes should not destroy historic material and should be removable in the future. Additionally the new construction should be differentiated yet compatible with the historic look and feel of the structure. When planning accessibility modifications to historic buildings, the steps are to first assess the historic significance of the property and identify character defining features; assess the property's existing and required level of accessibility; and evaluate accessibility options within a preservation context. Additionally, all applicable accessibility requirements including local codes, state codes, and federal laws should be reviewed carefully. Solutions to accessibility issues should provide the greatest amount of accessibility without threatening or destroying those materials and features that make a property significant. Modifications should be based on the following priorities: making the main or a prominent public entrance and primary public spaces accessible, including a path to the entrance; providing access to goods, services, and programs; providing accessible restroom facilities; and creating access to amenities and secondary spaces. More specific information for making various types of modifications can be found in the National Park Service's *Preservation Brief 32: Making Historic Properties Accessible*.

Exemptions to ADA Codes

In a small number of cases where this cannot occur, the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) provides for alternative methods of access. Congress established alternative requirements for historic properties that cannot be made accessible without "threatening or destroying" their historic significance. The ADAAG outlines methods of consultation and development of alternative methods of access such as home delivery and audio-visual programs.

State of Hawaii rules relating to ADA access and historic properties fall under the jurisdiction of the Disability and Access Communication Board (DCAB), State Department of Health. DCAB allows historic properties to apply for an "exception" to ADA compliance. The application form, titled *Historic Preservation: Provisions of the ADAAG*, should be completed together with a letter of explanation from the project consultant or architect identifying where the building fails to meet

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680 Iwilei Road, Suite 690 • Honolulu, HI 96817 • Tel: 808-523-2900 • FAX: 808-523-0800 • www.historichawaii.org Historic Hawai'i Foundation was established in 1974 to encourage the preservation of historic buildings, sites and communities on all the islands of Hawai'i. As the statewide leader for historic preservation, HHF works to preserve Hawai'i's unique architectural and cultural heritage and believes that historic preservation is an important element in the present and future quality of life, environmental sustainability and economic viability of the state.

ADAAG and asking for a "variance" or "exception." If at all possible, it is advisable to offer an alternative solution. This form must be signed by the State Historic Preservation Division and accompany the letter.

Resources and More Information

Information about the State's rules and form can be found at http://hawaii.gov/health/dcab//home/index.htm.

Access NPS Technical Brief #32 http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/32-accessibility.htm

Secretary of Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/standguide/

Check out Historic Hawai'i Foundation's Resource Center for more information! http://historichawaii.org/resource-center-2/

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