



Photo-Documentation for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties

Photo-documentation of a historic property is one of the most important aspects of applying to the Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Programs. It consists of a series of photographs, their numbering/labeling, and a photo-key drawing. These photographs are one of two primary resources used to evaluate a project to determine if it qualifies for the tax incentives, the other being the rehabilitation work descriptions. Pre-rehabilitation photographs are used to put the project within the context of the entire historic property and for comparison with the finished work. To achieve this, sufficient photo-documentation is necessary. The entirety of the historic property needs to be photo-documented, which also includes areas or spaces of the property that are not part of the proposed rehab work so that unchanged areas are confirmed as such upon project completion.

Without adequate photographs documenting the pre-rehabilitation existing conditions, a project may lack enough essential information to even meet minimal requirements for the review process. Any application with unclear, deficient, or not enough photographs of pre-rehabilitation conditions may be returned because of insufficient documentation to evaluate the project adequately. Finished project photo-documentation, though equally important, is typically less a problem because the opportunity to provide supplemental photographs, if necessary, is still available.

Photo Documentation Requirements:

1. **Color photos, sized at 4 X 6 inches are the *preferred format*.** Digital photos must have an image resolution of at least 300 dpi (dots-per-inch). Avoid Polaroid photographs; they are not acceptable for Federal applications and rarely provide enough level of detail and clarity to be acceptable for State Applications.
2. **ANY** photographs submitted with an application **MUST** provide obvious and comprehensible information. They must clearly show the areas or features being documented. Photographs that are out-of-focus, blurry, fuzzy, too dark, over-exposed (too light), photocopied, or low-resolution digital are unacceptable as adequate documentation. Photographs should be examined prior to submission to determine that they adequately provide the view that is intended.

3. Photos should be contained in a separate PDF file with no more than two photos per page, and with a minimum photo size of 4" x 6" per photo. The property name, address, date of photos, and application part (i.e., Part 1, Part 2, Part 3, Amendment) must be listed at the top of each page. The photo number (labeled according to a Photo Key) and caption must be listed under each photo. The caption must include the view shown (e.g., north side) and a description of the view (e.g., plaster damage in dining room, north wall). The Photo Key must be a separate PDF file.
4. Individual Photo Files: HPD and NPS will accept individual photo files limited to no more than 20 JPEG or TIFF files per submission. Only JPEG or TIFF formats will be accepted. Individual photo files must be saved within their own folder and named according to the NPS Naming Conventions.
5. Photographs must be taken in sufficient quantity and clarity to adequately document the pre-rehabilitation existing conditions and subsequently, the finished project. Enough photographs of all spaces, building elevations, and specific features must be provided as the visual description of the project's scope-of-work. At a minimum, typically, this would include photos of all exposed building elevations, 2 photos of each room, which should be oriented corner-to-corner from opposite corners, and additional photos of features and finishes being impacted by the rehabilitation work. Features and finishes may include, but are not limited to: masonry, plaster, windows, doors, trim and other millwork, stairs, ceilings, and fireplaces. If areas are too large or at a difficult angle, multiple photos need to be taken to ensure full and clear coverage of the entire area.
6. Photo-documentation of large projects with multiple, near identical spaces may not need photos of every room. In such cases, interior photographs of significant areas along with representative photos of the typical spaces may be acceptable.
7. Photographs must be labeled and keyed to a floor plan of the rehabilitation project. The position of the photographer, the direction toward which the picture was taken, and the photo number must be labeled on the drawing (a number within a circle with a directional arrow). The photographs themselves must be labeled with corresponding identification/information on their back.

Any application with insufficient, inadequate, or otherwise unacceptable photo-documentation will be put on hold, concurrent with a Request For Information (RFI) to the applicant, until the necessary photography is furnished. Should the information not be forthcoming in a reasonable period of time, the application will be returned without review.

Tips for Photographing Projects and Creating a Photo Key

1. Exterior photographs must document all facades of the building. Interior photographs must record architectural features and finishes, such as: windows, doors, fireplace mantels and surrounds, floors, walls, ceilings, stairs, mouldings, etc., as well as provide an overview of rooms throughout the building. Pay special attention to areas, which will be impacted by the proposed rehabilitation work.
2. Photo-key floor plans should be on 8 X 11 or 11 X 17 copies of the construction plans. If such is not available, floor plans can be hand drawn on blank or graph paper, but need to note all windows, doors, wall openings, fireplaces, stairs, etc.
3. A circle with the number of each photograph should denote on the floor plan the location of the photographer. The arrow identifies the direction of the photograph.
4. Keep a copy of the before-rehabilitation photo-key for reference when photo-documenting the completed project. For comparison, views of the completed work should be of and from the same locations.

Example of a Keyed Floor Plan

