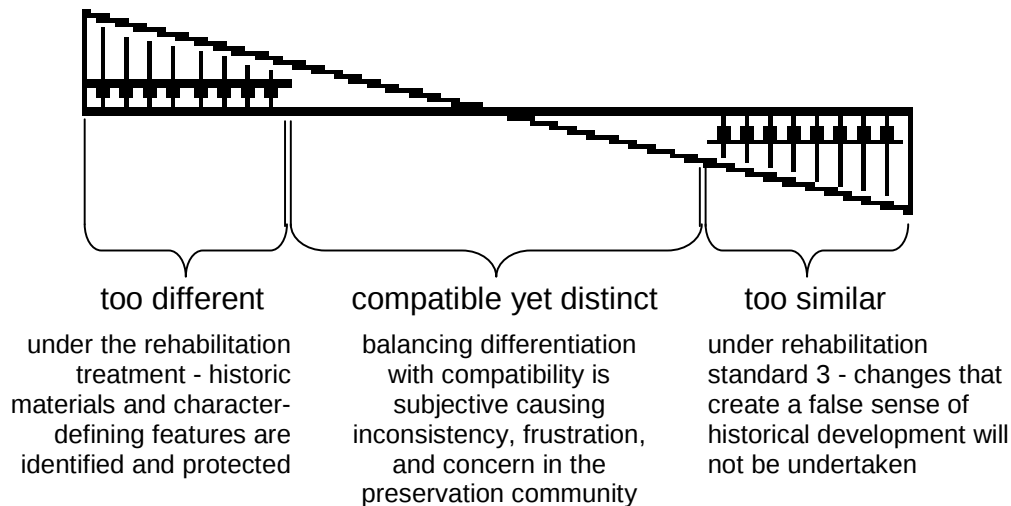


SECRETARY STANDARD FOR REHABILITATION NUMBER NINE DIFFERENTIATION vs. COMPATIBILITY

New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment. – [*Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation \(Standard 9\)*](#)



Consider design for an attached exterior addition in terms of its relationship to the historic building as well as the historic district or neighborhood. Design for the new work may be contemporary or may reference design motifs from the historic building. In either case, it should always be clearly differentiated from the historic building and be compatible in terms of mass, materials, relationship of solids to voids, and color. – [*NPS Guideline New Additions to Historic Buildings*](#)

“Standard Nine has proved troubling due to its ambiguity. While the standards do not call for new additions to be contrasting in character or require them to be in a contemporary style, they do require new construction to be “differentiated” without defining how, by whom, or to what degree, and to be “compatible” without offering criteria for achieving a harmonious relationship. The standards do not suggest where the balance between “differentiation” and “compatibility” should be placed, leaving broad latitude for interpretation. For NPS reviews of projects during the last decade or so, the compatibility requirement was typically met by consistency of abstract relationships like size, massing and horizontal façade alignments to tie new and old together. Differentiation is often achieved using a distinguishable Modernist style, albeit “toned down” so as to qualify as “compatible.”

“Ambiguous language of the standards and type of examples in NPS guidelines has persuaded officials around the country to err on the side of differentiation. The truth of the matter is that the doctrine of differentiation has become a mask for stylistic bias. Preservation regulations, including the standards, should not be construed to require the acceptance or rejection of any proposed addition solely on the basis of style. [Guidance to] clarify the criteria for differentiation and compatibility should not favor any particular style, but simply work to sustain the character-defining elements of the place.” – [*Steven Semes based on his forthcoming book, The Future of the Past: A Conservation Ethic for Architecture, Urbanism, and Historic Preservation*](#)