

WHAT IS THE REHAB SUBCODE?



The **New Jersey Rehabilitation Subcode**, or “**Rehab Code**,” adopted in 1998, is one of the most powerful tools available for preservation projects in the state. It is the first building code in the nation **written specifically for existing buildings**. Its provisions move away from the traditional building code, which is oriented toward new construction, and focuses on work in existing structures (not necessarily historic). Before the adoption of the Rehab Code restorative work, especially on historic buildings, was time-consuming and costly. However, since its enactment, the Rehab Code

has made the reuse of buildings safer, cheaper and easier, and has encouraged the preservation of New Jersey’s historic buildings. The code has specific requirements based on the project’s scope of work including repair,

renovation, alteration, reconstruction, change in the use of building, and additions. There is a special section of the code written specifically for historic preservation.

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The Rehab Code is based on three basic premises intended to make sure buildings built to this code are safe, yet can be rehabilitated in a reasonable and fair manner:

Maintaining building safety – Work performed should leave the building no less safe than it was when the work began.

Predictability – The Rehab Code establishes a clear set of requirements in a clear, cookbook approach.

Proportionality – The Rehab Code does not impose requirements that would significantly extend the owner’s scope of work. The requirements are in proportion to the work planned. The time to impose additional code requirements is NOT when a building owner has decided to make an improvement.

For example: New building code requires a minimum width for staircases. The Rehab Code allows for flexibility in width for existing stairways that allows builders to keep existing safe stairways and preserve their character.

All code inspectors have been trained in the new code. If you are working with an inspector who you do not feel is applying the Rehab Code correctly, please contact the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Code Assistance Unit.

For a complete information kit and copy of the Rehabilitation Subcode, contact The Code Assistance Unit at the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, Division of Codes and Standards, 101 South Broad Street, PO Box 802, Trenton, New Jersey, 08625, 609.984.7609 / www.state.nj.us/dca/codes/rehab.