08

CITY OF RAVENNA
HISTORIC DISTRICT
DESIGN GUIDELINES

ACCOMMODATING CODE COMPLIANCE + HISTORIC BUILDINGS

There are numerous myths about the building code and historic structures. The most prevalent are: “An old building cannot meet the current building code” and “It is too expensive to bring that old building up to code.”

The governing code for building construction and renovation in Ravenna is the Ohio Building Code - 2021, and the IEBC (International Existing Building Code) as adopted by Ohio Building Code - 2021. It is a uniform code for commercial properties across the entire state and based on national and international codes. Except for the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, building codes are not retroactive. Key aspects of safety considered by the code are: the construction materials, the building size, and the ability of the users to exit in an emergency.

It is important to note that the building codes are reviewed and updated on a regular cycle, typically every five (5) years. Your design professional, an architect or engineer, will verify the current code that is applicable to your project.

TERMS THAT SHALL BE CONSIDERED

Changes of Use Must be reviewed by the Chief Building Official for the jurisdiction.

Additions An extension or increase in floor area, number of stories or height of a building or structure. Additions shall comply with traditional code.

Alterations Any construction or renovation to an existing structure other than repair or addition. Alterations shall comply with the requirements of traditional code.

Existing Structure A structure regulated by the code that was erected or one for which a plan approval has been issued. Reusing or restoring an existing structure allows you to take advantage of the special provisions in the existing building code.

Historic Building Buildings that are historically designated in one of the following ways will be considered a “historic building”: through an approved local designation, an individual listing with the National Park Service, or a building that is a contributing structure in a designated historic district. Special accommodations are made for things like technical infeasibility, existing circulation components that need to remain and accessibility considerations, where these items do not make the building any less safe or constitute a distinct life safety hazard.

Compliance Methods The code allows a designer to use one of three different methodologies when analyzing an existing structure: Prescriptive, Work Area and Performance Compliance. These compliance paths provide alternatives to traditional code. For instance, the performance compliance path utilizes a point system, allowing the building to achieve additional points where it exceeds safety requirements and deducts points where the building is deficient.

©2025 Perspectus Architecture, LLC