

# A Flexible Project Design Philosophy

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When Brookline begins a project, we consider the building as the primary client. This is an essential approach for the contractor and the owner of the building to agree on. We consider ourselves to be co-stewards with you of your historic landmark, and we want to move forward with care and with the needs of the building forefront in our project planning.

A typical construction project design process begins with the owner's needs. The owner's needs are then translated into a concept, a design and plans, and then into the low-bid process. It is a straightforward timeline of events.

When the typical design process is used on historic buildings, the building always suffers. Here is why: Unknowns are inherent in any conservation project. Decisions about treatments are made too early, before adequate discovery is done. Contractors submit prices designed to get the job, expecting to make money on the change orders. Realistic pricing that accounts for unknowns is not put forward at the beginning of the project. Right from the beginning, the contractor and owner are in an adversarial relationship. When new conditions are discovered mid-project, the contractor submits change orders, which throw the budget and the schedule out the window. Inevitably, decisions are made to cut the building to fit the budget, the schedule, and the owner's needs.

Truly Authentic Historic Preservation begins with a project design that is evolutionary, not uni-directional, as in the above "typical design process." This means that the project is considered and planned in phases, with milestones and goals decided in advance for each phase. Each phase must begin with adequate discovery and testing, so that realistic information and pricing can be gathered. All members of the project design team must be prepared at any time to stop work and reevaluate if an unexpected condition is encountered.

Brookline knows that budgets are not unlimited, and that a scope of work is needed in order to proceed intelligently. We are seeking relationships with individuals and organizations where the needs of the building can be addressed adequately. Pricing a historic project is impossible to do all at the beginning. Once full discovery is completed, project estimates can be built that provide a loose framework for the phase of work. Dealing with "unforeseens" means communicating openly about what is discovered mid-project, and then adjusting to meet the needs of the building and the owner. Our proposal allows flexibility to make changes in the treatments required, potentially saving money, and certainly reducing stress, confusion, and unnecessary changes to schedules and budgets.

Contact us today for all your Historic Preservation and Restorations on your old and historic home.