INSPECTION CHECKLIST *for* HISTORIC BUILDINGS

May 1999

A Worksheet Approach for Property Owners:

Inspecting your historic building:

This checklist is intended as a guide for inspecting historic buildings. Since all buildings are different, the checklist is general in nature and can be adapted to fit specific cases. It can be used for conducting annual building inspections or inspecting a property prior to acquisition. This checklist is not intended to take the place of an evaluation by a professional building inspector, architect, engineer or contractor, and if building faults are identified through use of this guideline, such persons should be consulted for professional assistance in correcting the fault.

Roof:

The roof is typically the first line of defense against water infiltration and maintenance is critical. The following roofing materials can be found on historic buildings in Utah. They are listed in order of durability, beginning with the most durable.

1. Slate
2. Copper
3. Tile
4. Terne Steel
5. Wood Shakes
6. Wood Shingles
7. Galvanized Steel
8. Tar & Gravel
9. Asphalt Shingles
10. Asphalt Roll Roofing

Pitched Roof: commonly shakes or shingles.

___ Wood shakes or Shingles - are shingles missing or curling on the edges?

___ Asphalt Shingles - are shingles missing, curling on the edges or losing mineral coating (granules)?Gutters: an essential part of protecting lower building walls.

___ Are there loose, rotted or missing gutters or downspouts?

___ Are gutters clean and free-flowing?

Cornice (eaves):

___ Is paint peeling or blistering, especially on the underside?

___ General - too many layers of shingles? Consult with local building inspector if uncertain.

Flat Roof: commonly tar & gravel or asphalt roll roofing.

___ Are there bubbles, blisters, or cracks in the membrane? The roofing membrane should be tight to the deck and not move under foot.Metal Flashing:

___ Is there loose, missing, or rusted sheet metal flashing at chimneys, valleys, ridges, parapet walls, roof penetrations or other roof terminations?

Structure:

___ Does the ridge of a pitched roof or any portion of a flat roof sag? Some permanent deflection is normal, but excessive or progressive deflection should be checked by a structural engineer.

___ Are bricks, stone or mortar cracked or missing at chimneys or parapets?

Exterior Walls:

General: for all walls including clapboard, masonry, adobe and stuccoed:

___ Is the paint peeling, blistering or cracking (alligatoring)?

___ Is the wall out of plumb, unlevel or are there bulges?

___ Is wood trim sound, firmly attached and painted?

___ Are there open joints around door and window frames or woodwork?

Masonry Walls including Adobe:

___ Are there any major cracks in the masonry? Hairline and horizontal cracks usually do not represent a problem. Vertical cracks through masonry units and mortar joints or diagonal cracks signal problems and should be checked by a structural engineer.

___ Are any masonry units missing, loose or deteriorating?

___ Is the mortar soft and crumbling?

Note! Adobe is a very fragile material that is difficult to maintain. Consult with an experienced architect or contractor prior to undertaking repairs or improvements.

Foundations:

___ Is there vertical or diagonal cracking in the concrete or masonry?

___ Is the concrete or masonry spalling, crumbling or deteriorating?

___ Is the mortar in the masonry loose or crumbling?

___ Is there any wood, especially structural members, within 6" of the ground?

Windows:

___ Are all wood window components, exterior and interior, sound and painted?

___ Is any wood at the exterior sill, frames or sash decaying?

___ Is there evidence of excessive moisture penetration around the sash or at the sills on the interior?

___ Is the putty around the panes of glass firm and painted?

___ Do the sash operate smoothly?

___ Are interior or exterior storm sash available for use during winter months?

Attic:

___ Is there evidence of water leaks? Leakage very common at chimneys and eaves.

___ Are there signs of vermin infiltration (usually pigeons and bats)?

___ Is there insulation in the ceiling or roof rafters?

___ Is the attic vented?

Interior Spaces:

___ Is the plaster at the walls or ceiling damp, loose or cracked? Water damaged plaster below windows and diagonal stress cracks originating at the tops of window openings are very common.

___ Is there any evidence of water infiltration (stains) on the ceiling, around windows or on the lower walls?

___ Are walls bulging or out of plumb?

___ Does any portion of the floor sag? Some permanent deflection is acceptable, but excessive or progressive deflection may indicate structural failure and should be checked by a structural engineer.

___ Do floors deflect when walked on or loaded? "Live load" deflection can indicate undersized structural members and should be checked by a structural engineer.

___ Do doors open and swing freely on hinges? Binding may indicate uneven settling in walls or floors, or pressure being exerted on interior walls from roof structure.

___ Are stairs sound and stable with an appropriate handrail?

Cellars and Crawlspaces:

___ Do the walls and floors show signs of excessive moisture?

___ Is there evidence of periodic flooding?

___ Are there signs of vermin infiltration or termites?

___ Is there any wood, especially structural members, within 6" of the ground?

___ Are unheated basements and crawlspaces vented?

___ Are floors above unheated basements and crawlspaces insulated?

Plumbing:

___ Is there any evidence of leakage from supply or waste pipes?

___ What is the supply pipe material? Copper and Brass okay. Galvanized steel or iron won't last as long as copper or brass. Lead poses a potential health risk.

___ Are all faucets working properly?

___ Are all drains, including floor drains, working properly?

Heating and Ventilating:

Steam Heat:

___ Is the boiler tank leaking?

___ Is there evidence of leaking pipes? Look for stains and rot on floor around pipes. Leaking caused by rusted pipes, broken traps or valves and pipes clogged with mineral scale build-up.

Forced Air Heat:

___ What is the date of the last furnace inspection or service?

___ Are all belts tight and in good condition?

___ Do filters need to be replaced?

___ Does the motor and fan need to be oiled?

___ Are any registers blocked by furniture or inadvertently closed?

General:

___ Is heat distributed evenly?

___ Do thermostats work correctly to control room temperature?

Electrical:

___ Is the main electrical service to the building adequate? 100 amps is minimum by modern standards.

___ Is the insulation frayed on existing wires or are bare wires exposed in an unsafe location?

___ Is there any sub-standard surface mounted lampcord or extension cord wiring?

___ Are all lights operated from a proper wall switch?

Building Grounds:

___ Do all downspouts have splash blocks to divert rain water away from the base of the building?

___ Do lawn sprinklers spray on the building?

___ Is there any vegetation contacting the walls or the foundation of the building? Vegetation can hold moisture in wood and masonry walls and foundations.

___ Does the grade around the building divert water toward or away from the foundation?