

Pilot Reconstruction



FEMA

Pilot Reconstruction is the process of demolishing the original structure and replacing it with a new structure that is better prepared to handle extreme storms and flooding. This is achieved by building a new structure that is elevated off the ground to at least the Advisory Base Flood Elevation (ABFE). ABFE is the height, relative to mean sea level, that has a 1-percent chance of being flooded in a given year. Each parish in Louisiana has adopted an ordinance that requires new construction to be at or above the ABFE.

Pilot Reconstruction should only be considered if the existing historic structure is either not structurally sound to be elevated and/or remains in an area extremely susceptible to future storm damage and loss.

What are the Consequences of Demolishing a Historic Property?

Demolition of historic properties and new construction within a local or national historic district can pose serious threats to historic neighborhoods and communities. The effects of demolition can include, but are not limited to the following:

- Loss of a local and/or national historic district designation (depending on the overall number of structures demolished)
- Damage and/or loss of the neighborhood's historic character
- Setting precedent for demolitions in a localized area and encouraging a disregard for historic preservation guidelines
- Making new construction, that is not consistent with the historic characteristics of its surrounding structures and landscape, a possibility

What Style Do I Want My New House to Be?

Because these effects can have an irrecoverable impact on a historic district, careful consideration should be given when engaging in pilot reconstruction. All demolitions should be carefully planned to minimize impacts to the surrounding properties and new construction should be tailored to the surrounding historic properties or historic district (if applicable).

The Secretary of Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties provides the public with guidelines that will provide helpful assistance to those engaging in reconstruction.

- Reconstruction should be used to depict vanished or non-surviving portions of a property when documentary and physical evidence is available to permit accurate reconstruction with minimal conjecture, and such reconstruction is essential to the public understanding of the property.
- Reconstruction should include measures to preserve any remaining historic materials, features, and spatial relationships.
- Reconstruction should be based on the accurate duplication of historic features and elements supported with documentary or physical evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different features from other historic properties. A reconstructed property will re-create the appearance of the non-surviving historic property in materials, design, color, and texture.
- Reconstruction should be clearly identifiable as a contemporary rebuilt structure based upon historic design and/or historical architectural features.

The primary objective with reconstruction is to design and construct a new structure that is compatible with its historic surroundings. Again, this involves mirroring the preceding structure and those in its close vicinity. If new construction will seemingly produce negative effects to the historic characteristics of a neighborhood, the designs should be reconsidered. This also includes any new fencing, outbuildings, or landscaping.

Determining the architectural style of your structure can be helpful to the design and construction of your new home. We have developed a short form to basic architectural styles, *Which Louisiana Style of Architecture Does My House Fall Into?* or a greater explanation can be found in *Louisiana Speaks: Pattern Book and Louisiana Speaks: Tool Kit* (www.louisianaspeaks.org).