

HISTORIC FURNISHINGS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Intent:

- To establish policies and procedures for the handling of original and historic state capitol furnishings.

Background:

- The historic state capitol furnishings are owned by the people of the State of Washington, and cared for and managed by the Department of General Administration.
- Of the historic furnishings, those original to the buildings and their rooms were designed for those spaces and purchased by the state for use in the buildings of the state capitol group. They are an integral part of the historic buildings, and remain a legacy to the people of Washington.
- The 1999 State Legislature adopted an addition (Section 1) to chapter 27.48 RCW: “The legislature finds that those historic furnishings that illustrate the history of the state of Washington should be maintained and preserved for the use and benefit of the people of the state. It is the purpose of this act to establish the capitol furnishings preservation committee to increase the awareness of the public and state employees about the significance of the furnishings within the state capitol campus buildings as envisioned by the original architects Wilder and White.” Further language excerpted from Section 2 specifies the committee’s purpose: “ to promote and encourage the recovery and preservation of the original and historic furnishings of the state capitol group, prevent future loss of historic furnishings, and review and advise future remodeling and restoration projects as they pertain to historic furnishings.”
- RCW 27.48.040 defines “state capitol group” as the Legislative Building, the Insurance Building, the Cherberg Building, the John L. O’Brien Building, the Newhouse Building, and the Temple of Justice; and “historic furnishings” as furniture, fixtures, and artwork fifty years of age or older.
- In response to the legislative findings and direction, the Capitol Furnishings Preservation Committee adopted the following mission and goals:

Mission:

To promote and encourage the recovery and preservation of original and historic furnishings of the capitol group, for the enjoyment of future generations.

Goals:

To increase awareness of the significant furnishings within the state capitol group by:

- *Locating and reclaiming lost furnishings;*
- *preventing future loss of historic furnishings;*
- *reviewing and advising future remodeling and restoration projects about the furnishings;*
- *coordinating with commissions, committees and tenant groups of the capitol buildings regarding the care and preservation of original furnishings;*

- *providing educational information to visitors about the historic capitol group furnishings.*
- *Contributing to a long term preservation plan for the historic furniture, fixtures and artwork of the capitol group.*

The Capitol Furnishings Preservation Committee appointed a Subcommittee on Standards and Use of Historic Furnishings in August 2000, to establish a set of standards and use guidelines for the treatment of historic furniture in the Legislative Building. Their task was to develop a statement of philosophy and a framework of policies to guide the use and care of furnishings in the offices and public areas of the capitol group. These recommended policies would be shared with tenants of the building to provide policy guidance on issues like moving or removing furnishings, keeping sets of like furnishings together, adding new functional furnishings to historic rooms, identifying historic furnishings, and who to contact about repairs. After much discussion of appropriate scope and level of detail, the subcommittee agreed on three important policy directions;

A Furnishings Plan is needed for the historic spaces of the Legislative Building that suggests where historic furnishings should go, based on original placement;

Tenants should be educated about their historic furnishings, so that they can appreciate and respect them, better share them with their visiting public, and better care for them; and,

Historic capitol furnishings should remain in historic capitol buildings.

Key Issues:

- The repair and rehabilitation of buildings within the state capitol group necessitates removal of offices and furnishings to accommodate the construction processes, and to ensure protection of the furnishings.
- Rehabilitation timelines are compressed. (The statewide elected officials will be moved out of the Legislative Building by November 1, 2001. Legislature will convene in the Legislative Building for its 2002 session, and will be moved out by June 1, 2002. The Legislative Building rehabilitation project completion is expected by November 1, 2004.)
- GA lacks the policies, procedures, and authority to adequately carry out the legislature's historic preservation goals regarding the handling, care and safe-keeping of historic furnishings. The pending move makes this a high priority.

Recommendations:

To support its previously determined mission and goals, and to address the issues stated above, the Capitol Furnishings Preservation Committee offers the following policy recommendations to the State Capitol Committee/Legislative Building Renovation Oversight Committee (SCC/LBROC) for its review:

1. All historic state capitol furnishings shall remain in the state capitol campus buildings in which they were originally located, and to the extent possible, in the location or office in which originally placed.

- Prior to any move, each of the furnishings shall be inventoried and a determination made as to whether each piece is historic or non-historic. (For the purposes of this document, historic shall be defined as furnishings original to the state capitol buildings, or to the Old State Capitol Building, and those which are 50 years and older. Furnishings original to the Legislative Building are listed in the original purchase order, now found in the state archives.) An inventory procedure, as provided by conservator, will include the accession numbers, careful uniform placement of a label or bar code, types of furnishings, a location map, and photographs.

- All historic furnishings shall ultimately be recorded in a comprehensive survey, the first of which, the “Historic Furnishings Survey – Washington State Capitol Campus - June 1999”, has been completed. It documents selected historic furnishings in the Legislative Building and the Temple of Justice in two distinct volumes. The Historic Furnishings Catalog defines what is now owned, its present location, a photographic catalog, relative estimation of value, and care recommendations. The Historic Furnishings Condition Assessment recommends treatments, expected costs, and an assignment of priority. Using the survey procedure as provided by state conservator, those historic furnishings not yet surveyed shall be surveyed prior to the furnishings being moved. When feasible, information shall be gathered for the survey simultaneously with the inventory process. (The Legislative Building alone has 287 unsurveyed pieces.)
- The historic furnishings must be protected from damage and loss. During building repair and rehabilitation projects, the historic furnishings will require careful moving, appropriate care and secure storage. The necessary procedures to achieve this are briefly described below.

2. Historic furnishings may be removed from their original locations in specific instances, following established procedures for their documentation, safe-keeping and eventual return.

- Elected officials and their agents are stewards - not owners - of the historic state capitol furnishings. Those who desire to move the historic furnishings with them to temporary office spaces will accept responsibility for the relocation, care, maintenance, repairs, security, and eventual return of the furnishings to their original locations upon completion of the building project, or upon leaving public office. The furnishings shall return when the office holder retires or is not reelected.
- Furniture removal and care agreements, and specific maintenance guidelines will be provided by the state conservator.
- Historic furnishings that are not currently wanted in their original locations, will be used elsewhere, displayed, or stored by GA.

3. Off-site storage of historic furnishings shall be under the care of the Department of General Administration.

- The conservator shall determine whether the furnishings should be protected in place, or moved and placed in storage, and all necessary procedures.
- Storage facilities shall be clean and dry, and meet the conservator’s recommendations for environmental controls: maintaining 40 –50% humidity, and 60 –75* temperature.
- State Department of General Administration, working with the Conservator, shall oversee the stored historic furnishings and document their movements.

4. A transition procedure shall provide for the eventual return of all historic furnishings to their original locations.

- Ceremonial, A+ historic furnishings, as identified in the Historic Furnishings Survey, shall be returned to their original locations as soon as possible.
- All other historic furnishings, not identified as A+, shall be returned to their original locations upon the completion of the furniture holder’s term of office.

- As historic furnishings are returned to their original locations, replacement pieces should be provided.
- Prior to the Legislative Building Rehabilitation and Earthquake Repairs Project, the Department of General Administration shall temporarily locate, and maintain responsibility for formal, historic furnishings as appropriate for the ceremonial use of the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Insurance Commissioner, Auditor, Treasurer, Senate and House of Representatives. GA will return these pieces to their original locations upon completion of the project.

5. Efforts shall be made to secure and coordinate funding to facilitate the restoration and repair of historic furnishings.

- Explore the feasibility of funding the ongoing restoration and repair of historic furnishings through private donations to the Capitol Furnishings Preservation Committee Fund, a State Treasurer's Office account administered by the Washington State Historical Society (501C-3), state agency funding, and/or legislative actions.
- Using the Historic Furnishings Survey and working with each tenant, GA shall identify and prioritize the furnishings that require restoration and/or repair, and handle the arrangements necessary to accomplish the work.
- Coordinate restoration and repair projects with times of storage.

6. Tenants should be educated about their historic furnishings, so that they can appreciate and respect them, share them knowledgeably with the visiting public, and better care for them.

- An Historic Furnishings Education Subcommittee should be formed to give presentations on historic furnishings at orientations for Legislators and Staff, and to provide information for history tours.
- Provide informational materials for each office, specifically about their furnishings, the stories that accompany them, and their significance within the state capitol group.
- Provide a maintenance manual and seminars for maintenance and custodial staff to learn about proper care of the historic furnishings.
- Efforts shall be made to research, locate and reclaim lost historic furnishings, for return to the appropriate locations.