

## Summary of Article 34, Ohio Building Code

It is not uncommon to encounter problems with the building code when rehabilitating a historic building. The Ohio Building Code recognizes that historic buildings can be made safe even though they may have difficulty meeting the letter of the code. Therefore, a special section of the code – Section 3408 – has been enacted. Also referred to as Article 34, this section of the code gives the owners of historic properties the opportunity to evaluate the safety of the rehabilitated building based on the inherent safety features frequently found in historic buildings. Article 34 divides the elements of a building into parameters, including height, area, compartmentation, tenant and dwelling separations, corridor walls, vertical openings, HVAC systems, automatic fire detection, fire alarm system, smoke control, means of egress, capacity and number, dead ends (corridors), maximum travel distance to an exit, elevator control, emergency lighting, mixed-use group separations, sprinklers, and specific occupancy areas. Each of these parameters is evaluated for fire safety, general safety, and means of egress. A numerical value is applied to each (either positive or negative) and if the total reaches a minimum number established by the code, the building is considered to meet the building code provision. This evaluation process demonstrates that a building can be safe without meeting every requirement of a building code written for new buildings. Use of Article 34 has saved owners of historic buildings substantial costs while also protecting the character and integrity of the buildings. Architects who have experience working with historic buildings should be knowledgeable about Article 34 and be able to assist property owners in the evaluation. The information in this summary was drawn from an article by Mariangela Pfister, Ohio Historic Preservation Office, which appeared in the April/May 1999 issue of *Echoes*, published by the Ohio Historical Society. For current building code regulations and requirements, please contact the City of Steubenville Building Department (740) 283-6000 x 1700.