

SharePoint Designer Retirement and Upgrade Strategy

1. Current Environment Summary

- Platform: SharePoint Server 2016
- Usage: Static or semi-static faculty websites — no search, profiles, or document collaboration
- Design Tool: SharePoint Designer 2013
- Upgrade Plan: Move to SharePoint Server Subscription Edition (SE)
- Concern: SharePoint Designer's retirement (end of support in 2026) and future editability of site pages

2. Technical Context: What Happens on Upgrade

When upgrading from SharePoint 2016 to Subscription Edition (SE): - Classic pages, master pages, and custom layouts continue to work; SE is backward-compatible with 2016.

- SharePoint Designer 2013 can still connect to SE.

- No new Microsoft tool replaces SharePoint Designer.

Thus, pages remain editable via SPD until around 2026–2027, after which compatibility may degrade.

3. Risks After 2026

- No support or updates for SPD 2013
- Possible incompatibility with new authentication or TLS versions
- Browser and OS security updates may block design features
- No official Microsoft replacement for SPD

4. Recommended Strategy

To preserve page editability and manage long-term risk, consider these phased options:

Option A – Short-term (2024–2026): Continue SPD

Keep using SharePoint Designer 2013. Document customizations, refactor hard-coded content, and test compatibility after upgrading to SE.

Option B – Mid-term (2026+): Transition to Modern or External Editing Workflow

1. Convert classic pages to modern pages editable via browser.

2. Externalize HTML content using static site generators or CMS.

3. Use PnP PowerShell to automate content updates without SPD.

Option C – Long-term: Static Web Hosting Alternative

If SharePoint is used only for static faculty websites, migrate to Azure Static Web Apps, IIS static hosting, or another CMS platform.

5. Practical Recommendation

- Proceed with upgrade to SharePoint SE.
- Continue using SPD until 2026.
- Plan migration to modern pages or external tools by 2025.
- Maintain a test SE environment and document custom assets.

6. Summary Table

Timeframe	Editing Tool	Approach	Longevity	Notes
2024–2026	SharePoint Designer 2013	Continue maintenance	Short-term	Compatible with SE
2026–2028	Modern pages / PnP automation	Migrate to browser-based editing	Mid-term	

Supported by Microsoft |
| 2028+ | Static or hybrid CMS | Replace SharePoint for web hosting | Long-term | Simplifies
architecture |

Prepared by ChatGPT (GPT-5) – November 2025