

Technical Guides for Exterior Alterations

A Practical Series for the Preservation and Maintenance of Rockville's Historic Resources

1: Exterior Siding

Background

Wood is a common building material in most parts of the country and is used with varying dimensions and designs as siding in the historic districts and older areas of Rockville. Types of wood siding include beaded and plain weatherboard; German, reeded, and other novelty sidings; beveled clapboard of various widths; and milled and rough-sawn board sidings. Finish trims such as vergeboards, cornices, cornerboards, fascia boards, belt courses, water tables, and door and window surrounds are to be considered part of the exterior cladding.

Synthetic siding, such as **aluminum, vinyl or fiber-cement**, is designed to imitate wood siding and is often considered to eliminate exterior painting and reduce energy costs. However, the insulation value is negligible, and owners often paint the synthetic siding once the color has faded with time. National Park Service studies have shown that comparable energy savings and comfort can be obtained by window repair, caulking, storm windows and storm doors without the loss of original material and historic appearance. If not applied properly, artificial siding may cause permanent damage to the structure it is intended to protect. Replacement also may result in lower comparable property values, costly and irreversible changes in the character of the property, and almost always is inferior in appearance to painted wood.

Asbestos/cement shingles that have been applied over original wood siding in many homes in Rockville present a special problem. When asbestos fibers become airborne, asbestos can be a serious health hazard. If the asbestos shingles are in good condition, however, the asbestos fibers are firmly embedded in concrete and do not present a health hazard. If the asbestos shingles are removed with caution without breaking or crushing of individual shingles, the intact shingles are not generally considered a hazard. In general, it is recommended to leave the shingles in place and maintain them, perhaps freshening the appearance of the house with paint. It is not recommended to apply a new synthetic siding material over the asbestos shingles because drilling will release asbestos fibers into the air and create a health hazard.



Clapboard



German siding



Beaded weatherboard



Reeded novelty board

Synthetic Siding

Should synthetic siding be requested on historic structures as a last resort, the following conditions shall be followed:

- Install over the original siding, leaving the original siding in place.
- Match the texture, design, width and lap of the original siding. Avoid the "wood grained" texture that replicates weathered and deteriorated wood siding. The original installation would have been with fresh, smooth wood.
- Keep shadow lines of the structure by removing windows, doors and trim pieces; shimming out; and replacing after siding is installed.
- Retain and reuse the original cornerboards, vergeboards, window and door trim, and other distinctive elements of the structure.
- Ensure adequate ventilation to protect the original siding and structure from rot and structural damage caused by migrating interior water vapor becoming trapped between the old and new.

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1: Exterior Siding *(continued)*

HDC Policy

The Historic District Commission follows *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. The accompanying *Guidelines* recommend the repair and retention of original siding whenever possible through the following practices:

1. Retain the original siding and protect with paint.
2. If replacement siding matches identically to the existing in material, texture and dimension, no Certificate of Approval is required.
3. Use gentle methods to clean maintaining water pressure of an ordinary garden hose. Power washing can raise the grain of the wood, drive moisture behind the wood into the wall cavity, and cause damage to the overall structure. This will create an expensive problem to correct.
4. If original siding is deteriorated, it should be *replaced in kind*. An alternate approach, while not preferred, would be to use the remaining sound material on the visible facade(s) and install replacement siding on the remaining facade(s). The application of different siding material would result in the property owner's ineligibility for tax credits.
5. Synthetic siding is *strongly discouraged* for use on historic properties. However, sympathetic applications on additions may be permitted by the HDC.

Certificate of Approval

PLEASE NOTE - If repair or replacement materials match the existing materials *exactly*, no Certificate of Approval is required.

If changes are requested, the application for a Certificate of Approval must include the following:

- Dimensions, lap, texture and type of original and replacement materials
- Justification for use
- Photographs, brochures or samples showing proposed replacement

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Adopted Architectural Design Guidelines for the Exterior Rehabilitation of Buildings in Rockville's Historic Districts, Rockville Historic District Commission, 1977.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation, National Park Service, 1995 - www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/standguide/rehab/rehab_index.htm

NPS Preservation Briefs Series - www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm

- No. 3 - Conserving Energy in Historic Buildings
- No. 8 - Aluminum and Vinyl Sidings on Historic Buildings
- No. 10 - Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork
- No. 16 - The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors

For further information on asbestos materials, see the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's site at www.epa.gov/asbestos/ashome/html and Environment, Health and Safety Online at www.ehso.com

Tax Credit Information

Tax credits may apply. To maintain eligibility, please have before and after photographs of the work. Obtain HDC approval prior to undertaking the work if a COA is required, and make sure you follow all zoning requirements. Work done without a required HDC Certificate of Approval is not eligible for the tax credits. Forms are available on the City Web site or at the CPDS information desk.

Contact Us

For additional information and questions, please contact:
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