
4 GUIDELINES FOR REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT

This brochure, published by the Lower Merion Township Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB), contains guidance for repair and replacement projects in the Township's commercial and residential historic districts. The HARB reviews all exterior changes to historic buildings and new construction as part of its advisory role to the Building and Planning Committee of the Township of Lower Merion's Board of Commissioners.

The brochure is intended to guide your repair and replacement project, but does not replace consultation with qualified architects, contractors and the HARB.

Please review this information before planning repairs or replacement work for your property. Familiarity with the HARB's standards will help move a project quickly through the approval process thus saving time and money.

What is the difference between repair and renovation?

The basic difference between repair and renovation work is simple: **repairs do not alter** a building's historic design. **Renovation** and alteration projects often *do alter* the design of a historic building.

For example, a project to **repair** the deteriorated sections of a historic dormer in a roof **does not alter** the fundamental building design even if it involves the use of a substantial amount of new wood clapboard. But installing a skylight in the roof is considered a renovation project because it adds a new feature. Such a change *does* alter a building's original design and thus its historic integrity.

While renovations can be done in a sensitive manner, the HARB encourages owners to attempt repair and selective replacement work before undertaking substantial alterations or renovations.

What is important to know about repairs and replacement on a historic building?

The HARB encourages necessary repairs and in-kind replacement of historic materials and elements. These activities help maintain a building's historic character and can prevent the need for more intrusive or expensive work later.

The HARB recommends:

- non-intrusive repairs that respect your building's important materials and architectural elements;
- replacement, only after repairs have been deemed impossible, that uses original materials and techniques to the extent possible;
- the use of compatible materials and techniques that enhance and do not detract from the historic building. When in-kind replacement is impossible, use materials that are similar in design, color, texture, materials workmanship and visual quality to the historic original.



Cristina Wienschick/KES

Sensitive repairs and renovations to Dolobran, maintain the building's character.



Exterior changes to storefronts in historic districts are reviewed by the HARB.

Guidelines for repairing and replacing specific building elements

The following guidelines deal with repairing and replacing some specific building elements, including the roof, walls, windows and doors, porches and architectural details. Following the general dictum, "repair rather than replace, and replace rather than reconstruct," these guidelines clarify the HARB's standards for common repair and replacement projects.

Roof

The roof covers a large portion of your building's surface area and keeps the building dry. Changes to a roof's shape or roofing material can dramatically alter a building's appearance.

The HARB recommends:

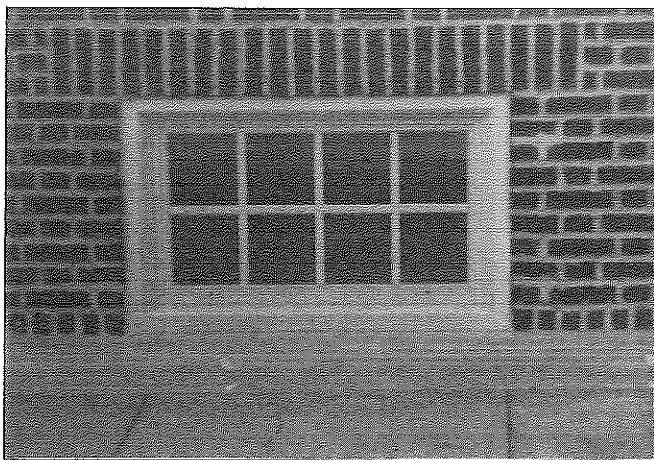
- use of in-kind materials or a return to original fabric to the extent possible for the repair and replacement of roofing;
- when original materials are unavailable or are cost prohibitive, use of materials that imitate the original materials in texture, thickness, shadow and color;
- in the event that a roof structure must be replaced, re-creation of the original roof's shape and lines.

Walls

As with roofs, a significant change in exterior wall materials can drastically alter the appearance and historic character of a building. Sensitive repairs and replacement of exterior wall fabric can enhance a building's character.

The HARB recommends:

- use of in-kind wall material where possible or surface finish that closely approximates the type and texture of original materials;
- clapboard, shingle or tile with an exposure (vertical dimension) that approximates the original;
- use of wall color that is appropriate to the era of your building;
- wall material that does not hide architectural details, eaves or cornices. Experienced contractors can usually retain and work with existing historic cornice brackets, water tables, corner boards, window and door frames and decorative trim.



This replacement window, in the Ardmore Commercial Historic District, follows the muntin pattern of the original windows.

Windows and doors

The HARB looks for the following in window and door repair and replacement projects:

- care in the installation of new screen and storm windows/doors;
- for replacement projects, the retention of historic door and window configurations and locations;
- guided by the examination of existing windows and doors, the use of original materials or compatible new materials, shapes and patterns when duplicating missing elements;
- retention of character-defining elements. Window elements include window type, muntin and mullion patterns and size, window surrounds, shutters and historic screening. For doors, retain the door type, sidelights and transoms.

Porches

Porches are often the most prominent character-defining element of a historic residence. Repair and replacement of porch elements can be highly visible and should be undertaken with sensitivity.

The HARB guidelines include:

- Repair and reinforce deteriorated or missing items. Do not replace an entire porch or feature when only repair or limited-element replacement is necessary.
- Retain unusual architectural elements in the course of repair work, such as brackets or a sunburst detail in the porch gable end.
- Replace deteriorated flooring, railings, columns and stairs with in-kind materials. If this is not possible, use compatible substitute materials. Substitute materials should convey the same visual appearance as the original and be chemically compatible (meaning the new material won't react adversely) with historic elements.
- Use your porch's original element shapes and patterns when replacement is necessary.

Character-defining details of historic buildings

When undertaking repair and replacement projects, don't neglect or accidentally destroy your building's important historic or character-defining architectural details. Destruction or removal of details such as overhangs, decorative shingles and brickwork, cornerboards, gutters and downspouts, moldings and porch elements can severely alter your building's historic character.

The HARB encourages:

- Retain and repair your building's important architectural details.
- Do not hide or obscure architectural details in the process of repair or replacement projects.
- If detail replacement is necessary, match the old in design, color, texture and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials.
- Document the replacement of missing details with photographs, drawings or physical evidence of the historic element.

Christine Jones/HARB



Following severe fire damage, a house returned to its previous appearance after repair and replacement.

Who Can Help Me?

If you are considering a repair or replacement project contact the HARB for review of your project in its earliest stages.

If you would like to discuss your project informally, the HARB has reserved 15 to 20 minutes at the end of every monthly meeting to provide advice and consultation to any member of the public. This informational meeting with the HARB will allow you to review your project and get feedback on potential concerns before you finalize your plans.

Contact the Department of Building Regulations at (610) 645-6200 for the date of the next HARB meeting and to schedule your consultation. The HARB is here to help.

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