

Commission of Architectural Review Guidelines for Administrative Approval of Window Replacement

Introduction: Windows help define a building's style and architectural character. The variation of styles and sizes of windows are reflected in the wide variety of architectural styles and periods of construction within City Old and Historic Districts. Windows are often an important, character-defining feature and their maintenance and preservation can be essential to retaining the overall historic appearance of a building. These guidelines shall serve as a supplement to and be deemed consistent with the *Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines (Guidelines)*.

The purpose of this document is to reiterate the *Guidelines* for the treatment of historic windows and to define the limited circumstances under which window replacements can be approved by staff without approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness by the Commission of Architectural Review.

In keeping with the *Guidelines*, windows should be repaired not replaced. Staff recommends applicants contact a window restoration specialist prior to beginning any project involving window repairs. Proper maintenance including adequately painted surfaces, intact caulk and glazing putty, and the installation of weather-stripping will ensure that all joints are tight and sealed to prevent water damage and prolong the life of historic wood windows. The installation of storm windows can further protect historic windows and improve their thermal value. The installation of storm windows can be administratively approved.

Though often considered a necessary update for older buildings, replacing original windows in most cases is not appropriate in City Old and Historic Districts and will not be approved by staff.

A. Items that do not meet the *Guidelines* and will not be approved:

1. The replacement of historic wood or steel windows that can be repaired.
2. The use of synthetic materials, such as vinyl.
3. New window openings or changes to existing openings.
4. The removal of any historic fabric, including window trim.
5. New windows with grid-between-glass, interior or exterior muntins only.

B. Items that will be considered for administrative approval:

1. Replacement of missing or already replaced windows. (See Section C for additional information.)

2. Replacement windows that fit the existing window openings without altering the size or shape of the opening or damaging any historic features.
3. Re-opening of filled-in windows that return window openings to their original dimension and the installation of an appropriate window configuration that is based on physical or documentary evidence.

Any new windows must be the same material as the historic windows or be historically appropriate wood, aluminum clad wood, or steel for industrial and commercial buildings, and must correspond to the dimensions of the opening and the documented muntin configuration of the historic windows, and must meet the Replacement Window Requirements presented below.

C. Replacement Window Requirements:

1. Documentation has been submitted that demonstrates the windows to be replaced are beyond repair. Documentation includes: photographs that show the overall condition of the windows, details of the deterioration and damage, and a complete window assessment form (see below) that accounts for all windows to be replaced.
2. The replacement windows match the number, location, size, and glazing pattern of the historic windows.
3. The replacement windows match the original windows in material, depth of reveal, muntin configuration, the reflective quality or color of the glazing, and the appearance of the frame and sash.
4. The replacement windows have the same lite configuration as the existing window based on physical evidence or photographic documentation of historic windows. The replacement windows must have true or simulated divided lites with interior and exterior muntins and spacer bars between the glass.
5. The replacement windows have clear glass with non-reflective coatings or tinting.

D. Items delegated for staff review

The Window Replacement guidelines, through adoption by the Commission, shall constitute items delegated by the Commission of Architectural Review for administrative review to Commission staff in accordance with Sec. 30-930.6(h) of the Code of the City of Richmond. Unless the Commission Secretary deems it desirable, for particular reasons, to present the items listed below to the Commission for review, Commission staff may approve them administratively. All such approvals shall be reported monthly to the Commission in accordance with Sec. 30-930.6(h).

Administrative approvals may be granted for proposed window replacement projects as follows:

1. The proposed windows meet the replacement window requirements identified in Section C, numbers 1-5.
2. State and/or Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit projects that have been granted Part II approval by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

E. Adoption and Effect

These administrative approval guidelines were adopted by the Commission of Architectural Review on September 25, 2018. The adoption and implementation of these guidelines shall be consistent with Sec. 30-930.6(h) of the Code of the City of Richmond. These guidelines are deemed to be consistent with and a supplement to the *Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*. These guidelines shall be in full effect and force until amended or rescinded by the Commission.



COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

WINDOW ASSESSMENT FORM

Windows add light to the interior of a building, provide ventilation and allow a visual link to the outside. Windows also help define a building's style. The wide variation in styles and sizes of windows reflects a wide variety of architectural styles and periods of construction within Old and Historic Districts. If properly maintained, historic wood windows can last indefinitely and can be retrofitted for energy efficiency.

Applicants proposing to replace any windows visible from a public right of way must complete a window assessment. This information is used to evaluate whether the condition of historic windows requires repair or replacement. Only complete applications can be reviewed, incomplete applications could be put on hold and delay the review process.

Instructions

Fill in the following table using one line per window. Use the repair class information below to complete the Window Assessment section of the table. Enter a 1, 2, or 3 depending on the level of repair required. For example, if Repair Class 2 repairs are required, enter a 2 in the table. If the element is missing, enter a 4 in the table. Please refer to the labeled window diagram on the next page when filling in the table.

The following must also be submitted with the application:

- Photographs or drawings of each building elevation, with the window opening labeled (corresponding to the table).
- A labeled photograph of each window.
- Close up photographs of damaged or deteriorated elements.
- Information on any proposed window product or replacement window including material, measurements, and pictures.

Repair Class 1: Routine Maintenance

Window elements are structurally and operationally sound and only require minor maintenance to return to "like new" condition. The type of work required can include: removal of paint build-up, replacing cracked and missing putty, replacing broken panes, weather-stripping, replacing sash cords or chains, and repainting.

Repair Class 2: Stabilization

Window elements possess some degree of physical deterioration including surface weathering and water damage that requires repair and protection from further damage. The type of work required can include: strengthening and stabilizing rotting or weathered wood with an epoxy, waterproofing damaged wood, filling surface cracks and holes with putty, and repainting stabilized components.

Repair Class 3: Splices and Parts Replacement

Sections of the window are so badly deteriorated that they cannot be stabilized and need to be replaced while still maintaining some of the original materials. The type of work required can include: replacing deteriorated parts with matching pieces, or splicing new wood into existing pieces.

Repair Class 4: Potential Replacement

Individual window element is missing or cannot be salvaged due to complete damage.

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