

REPLACING OR COVERING A HISTORIC WALL

The HARB encourages:

- replacing wood siding with in-kind materials. If wood isn’t a viable choice, consider siding that approximates the shape, size, direction, profile, texture and overall appearance of the original siding. Actions should be taken to prevent vapors from infiltrating the building’s interior, and prevent water penetration and condensation behind the new cladding.

The HARB discourages:

- changing the appearance of a building by covering a masonry wall with siding or a wood-sided wall with imitation brick or stone facing. New stucco is not recommended for either masonry or frame buildings.
- covering masonry walls with synthetic materials. In addition to aesthetic changes, moisture could become trapped behind the new cladding causing deterioration to historic materials and possible structural damage.

DECORATIVE WALL ELEMENTS

Many of the architectural details that contribute to a building’s style are wall elements. These include cornices, brackets, molding, corner boards, door and window surrounds, and a variety of decorative trim. Key features of a building’s style and character are lost when these are removed or covered over.

The HARB encourages:

- retaining existing elements.
- replacing lost decorative elements, as appropriate. Historic photographs and neighboring similar buildings can provide clues to a building’s original appearance.

The HARB discourages:

- removal of existing elements, particularly without replacement in-kind if originals are deteriorated beyond repair.
- covering existing elements with synthetic materials. In addition to aesthetic changes to the building, moisture could become trapped behind the cladding causing deterioration to the underlying woodwork.
- adding decorative elements that are not appropriate to the building’s age or style.

TIPS FOR ADDITIONS

Wall surfaces comprise the largest visual feature of the buildings in a historic district, contributing significantly to a neighborhood’s appearance and character. Addition wall surfaces should be compatible with those of the historic core and other buildings in the historic district. Brick, stucco, and wood are particularly popular historic wall surfaces in North Wales. Natural materials are recommended over synthetic materials.

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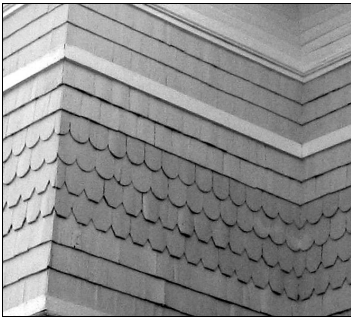
DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR WALLS

HARB
HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
North Wales Borough, Pennsylvania

KEEP THESE PRINCIPLES IN MIND

You want your building to be structurally sound and attractive. As a property owner in the North Wales Borough Historic Preservation District you also want to maintain the historical and architectural heritage of your property and your community. You can succeed at both by using the least intrusive method when developing your improvement plans.

MAINTENANCE FIRST • Frequently the easiest, least expensive, and often overlooked way to protect and preserve your building is a regular maintenance plan. Identify and correct potential problems before they become extensive and expensive. Be on the look out for loose or deteriorating building components, signs of water leakage or moisture penetration, and loss of existing protective coatings (such as paint on wood). Spotting these issues early can avoid problems altogether, or keep them to a minimum.



STABILIZATION AND REPAIR • If you review the condition of your property regularly, you will be able to correct potential problems early through stabilization or repair work. Stabilization and repairs do not change the building’s design and involve minimal work to existing materials. Become informed regarding appropriate repair methods and materials so as not to create new long-term problems in exchange for short-term solutions.

REPLACEMENT • When building components are determined too deteriorated to be repaired, consider replacing them using in-kind materials. Replacing a portion of a building element or detail with in-kind materials will retain the original appearance of your building. When replacement in-kind is determined unfeasible due to unavailability of materials or cost issues, use materials that are similar to the original, being sensitive to the original design and workmanship of your building.

ALTERATION • Alterations change the historic design of your building and can impact its historic district setting. If you determine that alterations to your building are necessary due to a change in the building’s use or living needs, again consider those that are the least intrusive. These include projects that are reversible, compatible with existing design elements and materials, and located on sides of the building not seen from public streets and sidewalks. Additionally, avoid alterations to your building that may not be historically accurate. Such alterations are not desirable as they often present a “false” history. Similar considerations should be given when embarking on a renovation project, using original design elements wherever possible for guidance.

ADDITION • Additions have the potential to impact a historic building and its historic district setting most significantly. Consider all other options carefully prior to planning an addition, such as reconfiguring the building’s interior spaces. If an addition is determined necessary, strive to create a design that is least intrusive to the historic building and the historic district. Projects that are reversible and located on sides of the building not seen from public streets and sidewalks are recommended, as are additions that retain the historic building’s form, profile, and design elements and materials. New additions should compliment the historic building. It is not necessary to match the original building. Additions that compliment, but not match, allow the original elements to be recognized and appreciated.



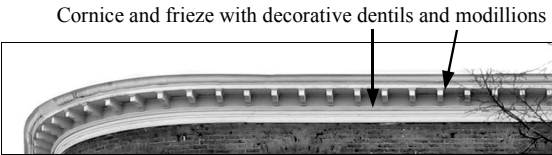
THE WALLS of a building are its single largest structural and visual element. Their condition and cladding are essential in the physical preservation and appearance of a building and a streetscape.

HISTORIC WALLS

Historic building walls are typically exposed stone or brick, or clad (covered) in stucco or wood siding. Each has unique textures, patterns, and colorations that contribute to a building’s character. Often historic building walls also have decorative elements (such as quoining, frieze, molding, cornice trim, half-timbering, or patterns created by various colors and shapes of cladding materials) that convey a building’s style and enhance its “curb appeal.”



Queen Anne half-timbering



Brick quoining; patterns created by color variations



Tudor half-timbering



Cornice



Decorative brick moldings



Stone quoining

MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR OF HISTORIC WALLS

Appropriate methods of maintenance and repair vary between construction and cladding materials, however cleaning should always be undertaken in the gentlest way possible and repair should involve the least amount of intrusion to historic materials. Often cleaning and repair projects intended to “spruce up” a building in the short run can cause unattractive and costly structural problems in the long run. If in doubt, the HARB recommends consulting a knowledgeable professional.

MASONRY (BRICK • STONE • STUCCO)

The HARB encourages:

- on-going review and regular maintenance of wall materials. Deterioration is often caused by excessive or trapped moisture in the masonry. Correct problems unrelated to the walls themselves such as leaking gutters and downspouts or moisture penetration from inside the walls.
- cleaning masonry using a low-pressure water spray. If heavily soiled, a mild soap and scrubbing with a natural bristle brush is appropriate.
- repointing localized areas of brick or stone walls where mortar joints have deteriorated. Note that there are significant differences between historic mortar and modern mortar that should be taken into consideration to protect the structural, as well as aesthetic, properties of a wall. Modern mortars with high content levels of Portland cement are harder and less permeable than historic lime based mortars. Mortars which are harder than surrounding masonry prevent natural expansion and contraction, thereby causing bricks and stone to fracture or crumble. Impermeable mortars force moisture into surrounding bricks and stone, causing them damage. Mortar for repointing projects should be mixed so that it is softer than the surrounding masonry and as soft, or softer than the original mortar. In addition, sand is graded by size today. To achieve a historic look in new mortar, incorporate sand grains of varying sizes and colors. Repaired mortar joints should match the color, texture, and tooling of the original mortar.
- replacing small areas of masonry, when needed, with materials that match the size, color, and texture of the original.
- removing modern stucco or simulated brick and stone facings *only* after determining the feasibility of removing them without damage to the historic materials underneath.

The HARB discourages:

- the use of inappropriate repair techniques and materials that could cause structural damage.
- painting exposed masonry. In addition to changing the historical appearance of a wall, the paint may trap moisture in the masonry causing deterioration.
- cleaning masonry by sandblasting, using acidic or caustic cleaners, or a high-pressure water spray. These techniques can cause damage and masonry failure.

WOOD (SHINGLES • SIDING)

The HARB encourages:

- on-going review and regular maintenance of wall materials. Deterioration is often caused by moisture, insects, and wear. Peeling paint does not necessarily indicate underlying wood problems, however attention should be paid to areas where bare wood is visible. This could indicate excessive moisture in the wood.
- repairing partially deteriorated wood with appropriate drying techniques (remove source of moisture and expose to dry air), insect or fungus treatments, and putty, caulking, and epoxy applications.
- retaining historic wood wall cladding. The natural colors, textures, and profiles inherent in wood shingles and siding are distinctive. Periodic painting is the best defense against wood deterioration, and is a relatively inexpensive alternative to siding replacement. Maintaining this necessary protective coat is generally enough to keep wood surfaces sound and attractive for many decades.

The HARB discourages:

- stripping wood bare prior to repainting. A gentle surface cleaning and light scraping and sanding should be adequate to prepare wood for repainting. Cleaning should be done with a diluted mixture of household bleach and natural bristle brush or sponge, with a low-pressure water rinse. If stripping is necessary, avoid using open-flame torches to remove paint, as they pose a serious fire danger to dry older woods. Use caution and care with any paint removal process.
- replacing historic wood wall cladding *unless* the existing material cannot be reasonably repaired.