

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

This chapter presents the design policies and guidelines for the rehabilitation of an historic resource located in Georgetown, including the Downtown Overlay and Old Town Overlay Districts.

Architectural details play several roles in defining the character of an historic structure. They add visual interest, distinguish certain building styles and types and often showcase superior craftsmanship. Features such as window hoods, brackets and cornices exhibit materials and finishes often associated with particular styles, and therefore their preservation is important.

Treatment of Architectural Features

Preserving original architectural details is critical to the integrity of an historic building. Where replacement is required, one should remove only those portions that are deteriorated beyond repair. Even if an architectural detail is replaced with an exact copy of the original, the integrity of the building as an historic resource is diminished and therefore preservation of the original material is preferred.

Materials for Replacement Details

Using a material to match those used historically is always the best approach. However, a substitute material may be considered for a detail when it appears similar in composition, design, color, and texture to the original.

In This Chapter:

Preservation of architectural details	38
Repair of architectural details	39
Replacement of architectural details	40

In the past, substitute materials were employed as methods of producing architectural features. Many of these historic “substitutes” are now referred to as traditional materials. For example, a stamped metal cornice on a commercial building was a substitute for stone. Just as these historic substitutes offered advantages over their predecessors, many new materials today hold promise. However, these substitute materials should not be used wholesale, but only when it is absolutely necessary to replace original materials with stronger, more durable ones.

Substitute materials may be considered when the original is not readily available or whose use is not feasible, where the original is known to be susceptible to rapid decay, or where maintenance access may be difficult.

Another factor which may determine the appropriateness of using substitute materials for architectural details is their location and degree of exposure. For example, lighter weight materials may be inappropriate for an architectural detail that would be exposed to intense wear. Also, it may be wise to avoid using a fiberglass column on a front porch where it may be accidentally damaged; whereas, the use of fiberglass to reproduce a cornice on a commercial building may be successful.

Policy: Original architectural details should be preserved in place whenever feasible.



Distinctive stylistic features and examples of skilled craftsmanship should be treated with sensitivity.

Architectural details—including their scale, texture, and finish—contribute significantly to the character of a structure. Porches, turned columns and brackets, cornices, storefronts, foundations, and window and door surrounds are examples of architectural details that should not be removed or altered. The best way to preserve many of these features is through well-planned maintenance.

4.1 Avoid removing or altering any significant architectural detail.

- Do not remove or alter architectural details that are in good condition or that can be repaired in place.

4.2 Avoid adding elements or details that were not part of the original building.

- For example, details such as decorative millwork or cornices should not be added to a building if they were not an original feature of that structure.

4.3 Protect and maintain significant stylistic elements.

- Distinctive stylistic features and examples of skilled craftsmanship should be treated with sensitivity.
- The best preservation procedure is to maintain historic features from the outset so that intervention is not required.
- Employ treatments such as rust removal, caulking, limited paint removal, and reapplication of paint.

Policy: Deteriorated architectural details should be repaired rather than replaced, whenever possible.

In some cases, original architectural details may be deteriorated. When deterioration occurs, repair the material and any other related problems. It is also important to recognize that all details weather over time and that a scarred finish does not represent an inferior material, but simply reflects the age of the building. Therefore, preserving original materials and features that show signs of wear is preferred to replacing them.

4.4 Repair only those features that are deteriorated.

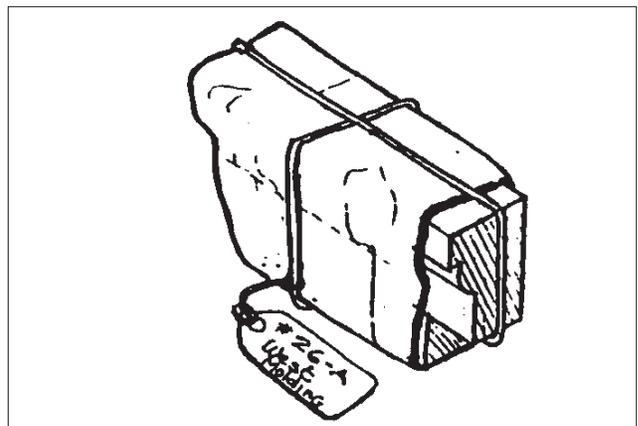
- Patch, piece-in, splice, consolidate, or otherwise upgrade existing materials, using recognized preservation methods as those identified in the Department of the Interior’s Historic Preservation Briefs, located online at <http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/>
- Isolated areas of damage may be stabilized or fixed using consolidants. Epoxies and resins may be considered for wood repair. Also, special masonry repair components may be used.
- Removing damaged features that can be repaired is not appropriate.
- Protect features that are adjacent to the area being worked on.



Repair only those features that are deteriorated. Above photo is the “before” condition of the lower image.

4.5 When disassembly of an historic element is necessary for its restoration, use methods that minimize damage to the original materials.

- When disassembly of an historic feature is required in a restoration procedure, document its location so it may be repositioned accurately. Always devise methods of replacing the disassembled materials in their original configuration.

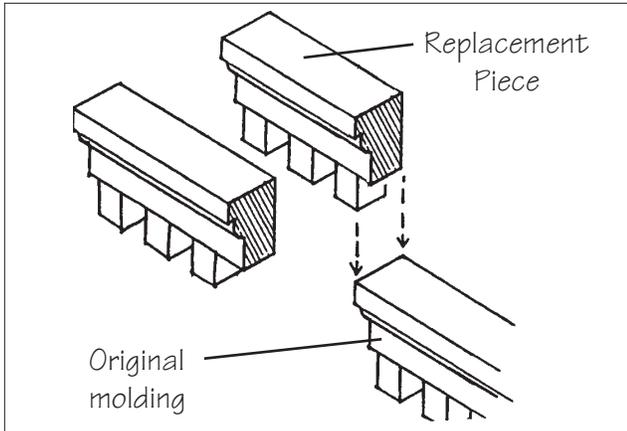


When disassembly of an historic feature is required in a restoration procedure, document its location so that it may be repositioned accurately.

4.6 Use approved technical procedures for cleaning, refinishing, and repairing architectural details.

- When choosing preservation treatments, use the gentlest means possible that will achieve the desired results.
- Employ treatments such as rust removal, caulking, limited paint removal, and reapplication of paint.

Policy: Original architectural details that have deteriorated beyond repair should be replaced in kind.



Where replacement of a detail is required, one should remove only those portions that are deteriorated beyond repair.



Replace missing original details in kind. (Walterboro, SC)



Dressing up a building with ornamentation out of character with the architectural style gives the building a false "history" it never had. This jigsaw ornamentation is out of character with the style and is inappropriate. (Memphis, TN)

While restoration of the original material or feature is the preferred alternative, in some situations a portion of the original building material may be beyond repair. Replacement should occur only if the existing historic material cannot be reasonably repaired. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match that being replaced in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities.

4.7 Remove only that which is deteriorated and must be replaced.

- Match the original in composition, scale, and finish when replacing materials or features.

4.8 Replace missing original details in kind.

- If parts are damaged or missing, replace them with the same material as the original.
- In some instances, substitute materials may be used. If substitute materials must be used, then they should convey the visual appearance of the original materials in design, scale, proportion, finish, and appearance.

4.9 Replacement of missing or deteriorated details shall be based on original features.

- The design should be substantiated by physical or pictorial evidence to avoid creating a misrepresentation of the building's heritage.

4.10 When inadequate information exists to allow for accurate reconstruction, use a simplified interpretation of the original.

- The new element should still relate in general size, shape, scale, and finish.

4.11 Avoid adding decorative elements, unless thorough research indicates that the building once had them.

- Conjectural "historic" designs for replacement parts that cannot be substantiated by documented evidence are inappropriate.
- Dressing up a building with pieces of ornamentation that are out of character with the architectural style gives the building a false "history" it never had, and is inappropriate.

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR HISTORIC BUILDING MATERIALS

This chapter presents the design policies and guidelines for the rehabilitation of historic building materials. They apply to individually listed historic resources, as well as historic properties located in the Downtown and Old Town Overlay Districts.

Brick and stone—used for building walls, chimneys, porch supports, and foundations—were the primary materials used in downtown. Wood siding also occurred on residential-type structures. Painted, horizontal clapboard was the most popular. In each case, the distinct characteristics of the building material, including the scale of the material unit, its texture and finish, contribute to the historic character of a building.

The best way to preserve historic building materials is through well-planned maintenance. Wood surfaces, for example, should be protected with a good application of paint. In some cases, historic building materials may be deteriorated. When deterioration occurs, repairing the material rather than replacing it is preferred. Frequently, damaged materials can be patched or consolidated using special bonding agents.

In other situations, however, some portion of the material may be beyond repair and may be replaced. The new material should match the original in appearance. It is important, however, that the extent of replacement materials be minimized, because the original materials contribute to the authenticity of the property as an historic resource. Even when the replacement material exactly matches the original, the integrity of an historic building is to some extent compromised when extensive amounts of original materials are removed.

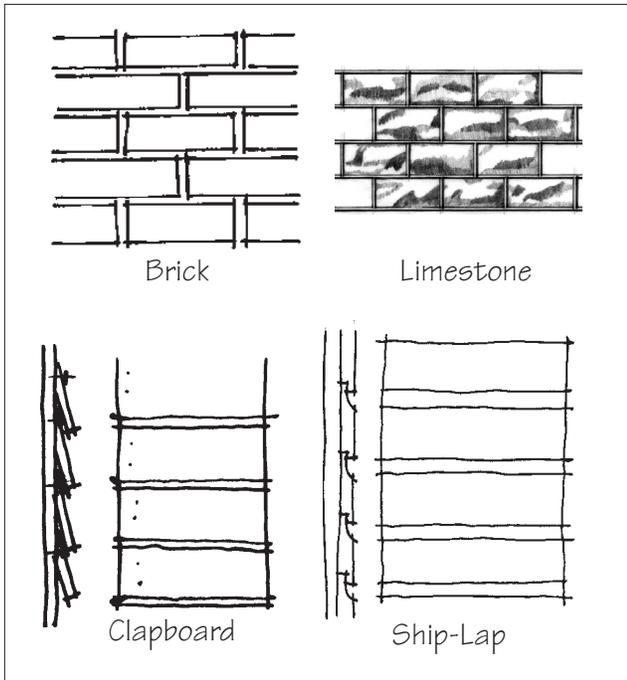
In This Chapter:

Preservation of original materials	42
Repair of original materials	43
Replacement of original materials	44
Covering original materials	45
Maintenance of original wood	47
Preservation of masonry	48
Preservation of metals	49

Rather than replace original materials, some property owners may consider covering them. Aluminum and vinyl siding are examples of materials that are often discussed. However, using any material, either synthetic or conventional, to cover historic materials is inappropriate. Doing so would obscure the original character and change the dimensions of walls, which are particularly noticeable around door and window openings. The extra layer may in fact cause additional decay, by its method of attachment, because it may trap moisture inside the wall and because it also creates cavities in which insects can live. For similar reasons, if original wall materials are presently covered with a more recent siding, consider removing the outer layer and restore the original. When damaged, these materials also can be more difficult to repaint, repair, or replace.

Building materials—including such characteristics as their scale, texture, and finish—contribute significantly to the character of a structure. The best way to preserve many of these features is through well-planned maintenance.

Policy: Original building materials should be preserved in place, whenever feasible.



Examples of the variety of exterior wall materials found in Georgetown.

5.1 Maintain existing wall materials and textures.

- Avoid removing materials that are in good condition or that can be repaired in place.
- Remove only those materials that are deteriorated and must be replaced.
- Avoid rebuilding a major portion of an exterior wall that could be repaired. Reconstruction may result in a building that is no longer historic.
- In many cases, original building materials may not be damaged beyond repair and do not require replacement. Repainting wood, ensuring proper drainage, and keeping the material clean may be all that is necessary.

Policy: Deteriorated building materials should be repaired rather than replaced, whenever possible.

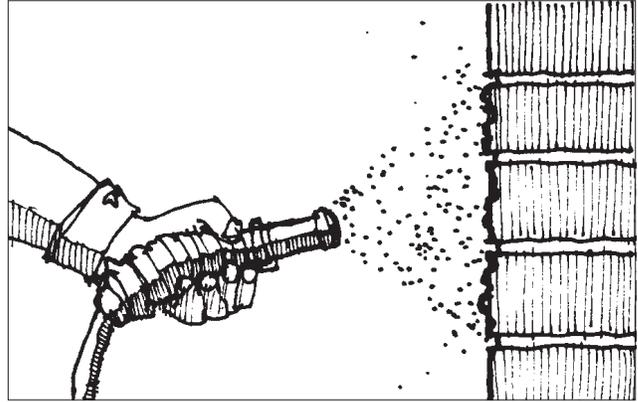
In some cases, original building materials may be deteriorated. When deterioration occurs, repair the material and any other related problems. It is also important to recognize that all materials weather over time and that a scarred finish does not represent an inferior material, but simply reflects the age of the building. Therefore, preserving original materials that show signs of wear is preferred to replacing them.

5.2 Repair deteriorated primary building materials by patching, piecing-in, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing the materials.

- Avoid the removal of damaged materials that can be repaired.
- Isolated areas of damage may be stabilized or fixed, using consolidants. Epoxies and resins may be considered for wood repair. Also, special masonry repair components may be used.

5.3 Use technical procedures that preserve, clean, refinish, or repair historic materials and finishes.

- A professional experienced in the cleaning of historic buildings should be hired to advise on the best, lowest impact method of cleaning that is appropriate for a project.
- Perform a test patch to determine that the cleaning method will cause no damage to the material's surface or to surrounding materials. Many procedures, such as sandblasting, are not appropriate, as they permanently erode building materials and finishes and accelerate deterioration.
- If cleaning is appropriate, a low-pressure water and detergent wash, using plastic or fiber bristle brushes, is encouraged. A steam wash may also be considered.
- Clean masonry only when necessary to arrest deterioration (but not for cosmetic reasons).
- See also *Preservation Briefs #6: Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings*, published by the National Park Service.



Use the gentlest means possible to clean the surface of a structure. Harsh cleaning methods, such as sandblasting, can damage the historic materials, changing their appearance. Such procedures are inappropriate.

Policy: Original building materials that have deteriorated beyond repair should be replaced in kind.



Match the original material in composition, scale, and finish when replacing it on a primary surface.

While restoration of the original material or feature is the preferred alternative, in some situations, a portion of the original building material may be beyond repair. Replacement should occur only if the existing historic material cannot be reasonably repaired.

5.4 Match the original material in composition, scale and finish when replacing it on a primary surface.

- If the original material is wood clapboard, for example, then the replacement material should be wood as well. It should match the original in size, the amount of exposed lap, and finish.
- Replace only the amount required. If a few boards are damaged beyond repair, then only replace them and not the entire wall.

5.5 Do not use synthetic materials, such as aluminum, vinyl siding, or panelized brick, as replacements for primary building materials on an historic structure.

- Primary building materials such as wood siding and brick may not be replaced with synthetic materials.
- See also *Preservation Briefs #16: The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors*, published by the National Park Service.



Replace missing original details in kind.

Policy: The covering of original building materials is not appropriate.

Rather than repairing or replacing siding, some property owners may entertain the idea of covering the original building material. Aluminum and vinyl siding are examples of synthetic materials that are often considered. Using these products to cover historic materials is inappropriate. Doing so obscures the original character and changes the dimensions of walls, which is particularly noticeable around door and window openings.

5.6 Historic building materials or features shall not be covered.

- No material shall be applied as a covering to historic materials.
- Synthetic stucco, panelized brick, vinyl, aluminum, or other composite siding materials are not appropriate.
- See also *Preservation Briefs #8: Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings*, published by the National Park Service.

5.7 Consider removing materials that cover original siding.

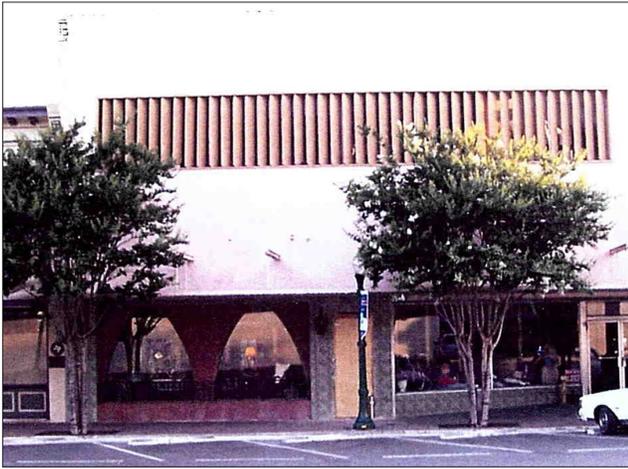
- Removing later covering materials that have not achieved historic significance is encouraged.
- In some instances a later covering may have achieved historic significance, especially if it was applied early in the building's history. When this is the case, the later covering may be maintained on the structure.
- An applicant may not re-side a building with another covering material if one already exists. Removing the covering to expose the original material is appropriate in such a case.
- Once the covering siding has been removed, repair the original underlying material.



If a storefront is covered or obscured with a later alteration (top photo), then restore the storefront to its historic character (bottom photo). (Austin, TX)

Case Studies: Uncovering Building Materials

These photographs illustrate the positive results of removing later covering materials.



Before: Historic features hidden.



After: Historic features revealed and cornice reconstructed.



After: Continuity of the block restored.



Before: Asphalt siding covers the original wood.



After: Original wood siding revealed.

Policy: Original wood should be protected against moisture and deterioration.

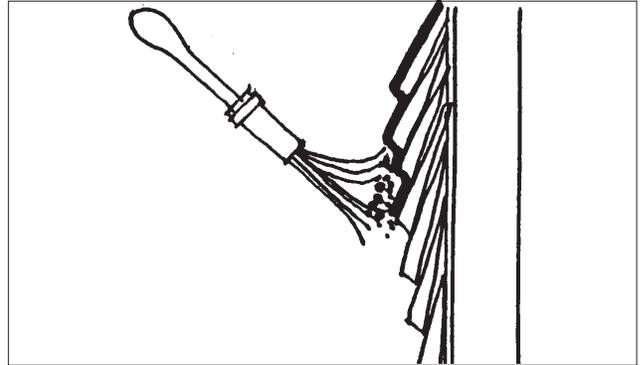
Wood appears frequently in Georgetown. It is used for siding, trim, windows, doors and porches. To preserve the wood, it is important to maintain its painted finish.

5.8 Protect wood features from deterioration.

- Provide proper drainage and ventilation to minimize rot.
- Maintain protective coatings to retard drying and ultraviolet damage. Exterior wood walls should be painted, not stained. If the building was painted historically, it should remain painted, including all trim.

5.9 Plan repainting carefully.

- Note that frequent repainting of trim materials may cause a buildup of paint layers that obscures architectural details. When this occurs, consider stripping paint layers to retrieve details. However, if stripping is necessary, use the gentlest means possible, being careful not to damage architectural details and finishes.
- Good preparation is key to successful repainting, but the buildup of old paint layers is an important historic record of the building. The removal of old paint, by the gentlest means possible, should be undertaken only if necessary to the success of the repainting.
- Old paint may contain lead. Precautions should be taken when sanding or scraping is necessary.
- Prepare a good substrate and use compatible paints. Some latex paints will not bond well to earlier oil-based paints without a primer coat.
- See also *Preservation Briefs #10: Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork*, published by the National Park Service.



All wood surfaces should be painted.

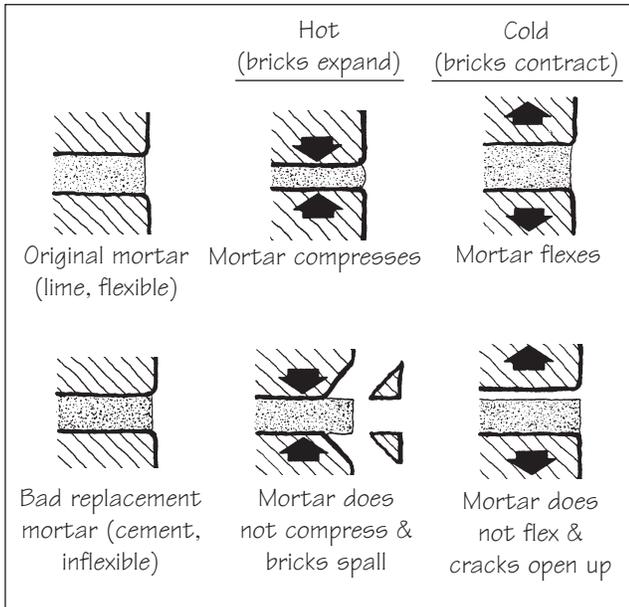


Maintain protective coatings to retard drying and ultraviolet damage. If the building was painted originally, it should remain painted.



Protect wood features from deterioration.

Policy: Masonry construction should be preserved in its original condition.



Repoint mortar joints where there is evidence of deterioration. Duplicate the mortar joints in width and profile.



Avoid using mortar with a high portland cement content, which will be substantially harder than the brick and does not allow for expanding and contracting. The result is deterioration of the brick itself.

Many buildings include brick or stone for structural walls, foundation piers, and chimneys. Although it is a very durable material, masonry is not invulnerable. Therefore the proper maintenance and preservation of masonry is important.

5.10 Preserve the original mortar joint and unit size, the tooling and bonding patterns, coatings, and color of masonry surfaces.

- Original mortar, in good condition, should be preserved in place.
- See also *Preservation Briefs #1: The Cleaning and Waterproof Coating of Masonry Buildings*, published by the National Park Service.

5.11 Repoint only those mortar joints where there is evidence of moisture problems or when sufficient mortar is missing.

- Duplicate the old mortar in strength, composition, color, texture and joint width, and profile.
- Mortar joints should be cleared with hand tools. Using electric saws and hammers to remove mortar can seriously damage the adjacent brick.
- Do not use mortar with a high percentage of portland cement or white masonry cement content. It will be harder than the masonry and will not allow for expansion and contraction. The result is deterioration of the material itself.
- A mortar formula containing lime should fill the joint but should not overfill it, and it should not be smeared on the faces of the masonry units.
- See also *Preservation Briefs #2: Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Brick*, published by the National Park Service.

5.12 Masonry that was not painted historically shall not be painted.

- Painting masonry walls can seal in moisture already in the masonry, thereby not allowing it to breathe and causing extensive damage over the years.

5.13 Protect masonry from water deterioration.

- Provide proper drainage so that water does not stand on flat, horizontal surfaces or accumulate in decorative features.



Protect masonry from water deterioration. Eroded mortar here is evidence of moisture penetration.

Policy: Architectural metals should be protected against corrosion.

Metals were used for a variety of applications including columns, storefronts, siding, roofing, window hoods, and decorative features. Metal applications should be maintained where they exist.

5.14 Preserve architectural metal features that contribute to the overall historic character of the building.

- Examples are columns, roofs, window hoods, and storefronts.
- Provide proper drainage to minimize water retention.
- Maintain protective coatings, such as paint, on exposed metals.



Maintain protective coatings, such as paint, on exposed metals. Repaint metal surfaces, such as this one, to preserve it.

5.15 Repair metal features by patching, splicing or otherwise reinforcing the original metal whenever possible.

5.16 Use the gentlest cleaning method possible when removing deteriorated paint or rust from metal surfaces.

- Harsh abrasive cleaning methods should be avoided.



Preserve architectural metal features that contribute to the overall historic character of the building.

