

POLICY STATEMENT REGARDING THE USE OF VINYL
AND OTHER SUBSTITUTE MATERIALS FOR SIDING, WINDOWS, DOORS AND PORCHES
IN YORK'S HISTORIC DISTRICT.

This policy states the position of the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) regarding the use of vinyl as a material within the Historic District of York. This statement recognizes that there are properties within the Historic District that currently have vinyl siding which was installed prior to the adoption of the City of York Historical District Construction Design Standards. At some point in time, that material will need to be repaired or replaced, therefore the Board seeks to make clear it's method and approach to weighing the appropriateness of this material.

Based on the guidelines and the "Secretary of the Interior's Standard for The Treatment of Historic Properties" publication, the preferred method for treatment of historic properties is repairing original features to the greatest extent possible, and to replace historic features with like historic materials where repair is not possible. However, there are instances in which utilizing substitute materials may be permissible and appropriate.

The BAR hereby defines Substitute Materials as new materials or technology which are designed to simulate the appearance of historic materials. Situations in which the use of substitute materials may be appropriate include:

- ☐ When the historic material is no longer manufactured or sourced (for instance, a particular type of slate, stone, or old-growth lumber)
- ☐ Where historic craft techniques or skilled artisans are not available
- ☐ When the historic feature has already been lost and little is known about its original appearance
- ☐ Where the historic material does not meet existing code requirements
- ☐ Where the property is non-contributing (see Appendix, p. A-18 in the City of York Historical District Construction Design Standards for definition), has already been significantly altered with modern materials prior to the establishment of the Historic District, or the material is used on non-visible elevations

There are issues associated with using substitute materials. They include a lack of repairability, and a lack of durability and/or a shorter lifespan as compared to traditional materials. Some substitute materials are physically incompatible with existing historic building fabric and can trap moisture or cause damage to remaining historic fabric due to incompatible thermal expansion and contraction. Therefore, substitute materials shall not be used to cover existing historic materials or features, nor shall they be used to replace sound historic materials for the sake of convenience.

Substitute materials will only be considered for use if they will not damage existing historic features and if they will not negatively alter the appearance of the historic resource. The new substitute material should mimic the original in form, dimension and perceived texture. The BAR will judge applications which propose the use of a substitute material in place of historic materials on a case-by-case basis using the guidelines established in the City of York Historical District Construction Design Standards and this policy statement and will approve or deny such materials based on each particular situation.

Factors that the BAR will consider when evaluating applications for the use of substitute materials include:

- ☐ Is the existing material historic (is it the same material that was used for the same function when the structure was originally built)?

- ☐ How durable is the new product vs. the old in the same environment?
- ☐ How similar is the new product in size, proportion, detail, profile, texture, and finish?
- ☐ Will the new product be physically compatible with the remaining materials?
- ☐ How much of the new material will be used?
- ☐ Where will the material be used?

SIDING

Maintaining and preserving existing historic wood siding is the preferred approach in York's Historic District. Generally, when wood siding is in poor condition, spot replacements using in-kind materials to replace boards that are deteriorated beyond repair is the best approach. When the entirety of the wood siding is beyond repair, or on secondary elevations, new additions or new structures, cement fiberboard, such as Hardie Plank, with a smooth finish to mimic planed and painted wood is an appropriate replacement for existing wood siding. Vinyl siding is not an appropriate replacement or substitute material for existing wood or cement fiberboard siding in the Historic District, and its use as such will not be approved.

In some cases, prior to the adoption of the City of York Historical District Construction Design Standards, historic wood siding was replaced with vinyl, asbestos, or aluminum siding, or vinyl siding was applied over asbestos siding as a more cost-effective alternative to removal and disposal of asbestos siding. Vinyl siding may be considered as a replacement material when it can be documented that existing vinyl, asbestos or aluminum siding was applied before the district standards were established, or when existing vinyl siding is covering asbestos siding.

WINDOWS

VINYL-CLAD

Vinyl-clad windows are similar to aluminum clad windows, in that they are wood windows with a vinyl facing. Vinyl-clad windows may be appropriate for use in properties constructed in the mid-20th century and after, on non-visible elevations, and on non-contributing properties in the Historic District.

VINYL

Vinyl windows are made of PVC (polyvinyl chloride) and are a commonly proposed replacement window. Vinyl windows are not appropriate for use in the Historic District primarily because they are not available in proportions or finishes that are compatible with historic buildings. Because of the way the product is made, vinyl windows have narrow stiles and rails on the sashes which do not match the thicker proportions typically found in historic windows. Vinyl windows are not paintable and are the least durable of window materials. They tend to fade and warp with UV exposure and have a typical lifespan of only ten to fifteen years. Vinyl windows will not be approved for use in the Historic District.

DOORS

Like windows, properly maintaining and preserving historic doors is the preferred approach, particularly for the main entrance of a property. For visible elevations, particularly the main entry door, the replacement door should match as closely as possible the material, size, proportions, and configuration of the historic door that it is replacing. Metal, fiberglass and composite replacement doors may be appropriate for non-visible (side and rear) elevations if they fit the character of the historic building. For

the reasons listed above for vinyl windows, vinyl doors are not appropriate for use in the Historic District and will not be approved.

PORCH MATERIALS

In York's Historic District, most original porch materials like columns, railings, balusters, floors, and decorative elements are made of wood. Repairing and maintaining historic porches and their original materials is the preferred approach. When repair of the original is not an option, some alternative or substitute material options may be considered.

FLOORING

Composite flooring is a substitute material which is made from a mix of plastic and wood fibers. These materials are formed into planks to imitate wood decking and are installed in a manner similar to traditional wood planks. Use of composite flooring is appropriate for rear decks and may be appropriate on front porches if the material closely matches the original in profile, dimension, and finish. Detailed information will be required showing both existing materials and proposed substitutions. Existing material shall be documented by photographs that show dimensions and profiles. Proposed substitution material shall be documented by photographs and/or specification sheets that show dimensions and profiles, or with samples.

COLUMNS AND RAILINGS

Although typically more expensive than wood, fiberglass columns are available in a variety of shapes and sizes that mimic the classical orders (Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, etc.), and the square, tapered columns found on Craftsman style bungalows. Similarly, fiberglass railings are available in a range of styles and profiles. Fiberglass may be appropriate if it closely matches the design and proportion of the original columns and/or railings. Detailed information will be required showing both existing materials and proposed substitutions. Existing material shall be documented by photographs that show dimensions and profiles. Proposed substitution material shall be documented by photographs and/or specification sheets that show dimensions and profiles, or with samples.

Vinyl columns and railings are also widely available, but the dimensions of vinyl columns typically do not match proportions and profiles found on historic structures. Like vinyl windows and doors, vinyl porch columns and railings are susceptible to fading and warping as a result of UV exposure and have a relatively short lifespan. Therefore, vinyl columns and railings are not appropriate for use in the Historic District and will not be approved.