BAR Review Levels

These levels of review are applicable in most cases. Please note that during the administrative review process, Staff may determine that a project must be reviewed by the Board. Contact Staff at 703.746.3833 to confirm which level of review is required for your project.

NO BAR REVIEW	ADMINISTRATIVE (STAFF) REVIEW	BOARD REVIEW
Replacement of siding or trim less than 25 square feet	Replacement of siding or trim greater than or equal to 25 square feet	Encapsulation or removal of historic siding material greater than or equal to 25 square feet Use of materials not explicitly allowed by these guidelines

Introduction

Most historic buildings in Alexandria had wood frames and wood siding. Other siding materials, such as asbestos, Formstone, and faux brick became commercially available in the early 20th Century, but aluminum, modern fiber cement and vinyl were not used until the late 20th Century. The size and type of a building's siding can indicate its age and architectural style, and siding is one the principal character-defining elements of a building. Historically, more decorative "novelty" siding was used on the primary facades. Often, less expensive clapboard or rough-sawn siding was used on the secondary facades. An informed and careful analysis of the existing siding condition should be made before any decision to replace historic siding is made. Maintenance of siding is important because improperly maintained siding affects not only the appearance of a structure, but also its overall integrity. For siding and trim, there are different regulations for buildings constructed before 1932 (Early buildings) and after 1931 (Later buildings).

Unlike in some Southern cities, historically stucco was rarely used as a finish in Alexandria. The Atheneum, Lyceum, Old Town Community Baptist Church, and St. Paul's Episcopal Church are among the only local historic buildings that used stucco. In these cases, the stucco was scored and faux-finished to look like stone blocks. In some instances, stucco may have been later applied over historic siding. When this is the case, the Board encourages the removal of this non-historic stucco and restoration or replacement of the historic siding.

Guidelines

All Buildings

- Historic wood siding should be retained and repaired wherever possible, as determined by Staff. If Staff determines that historic wood siding may be replaced, composite siding such as fiber cement can be used on the side and rear (all non-street facing sides). Historic wood siding on the front (all street-facing sides) can only be replaced in-kind.
- Repairs should match the material and profile of existing historic siding.
- Aluminum and vinyl siding are not appropriate in the historic districts.
- Wood shingle siding is not appropriate, except on decorative Victorian gables.
- The Board only requires restoration of features that are being altered. Siding materials that existed when the Parker-Gray District was created in 1983 may be retained and repaired in-kind, but if existing siding is removed, these elevations should comply with current guidelines.

Early Buildings (pre-1932)

- Before siding can be replaced, Staff will inspect a mock-up in the field to determine whether there is any intact historic siding hidden beneath existing siding layers. See "Additional Information" section for more details on the mock-up inspection process.
- If Staff finds that existing historic siding is beyond reasonable repair, new siding should match the profile and design of the original. If historic siding is not present, historically appropriate wood siding should be used on the front (all street-facing sides).
- Composite siding such as fiber cement can be used on the side and rear (all non-street facing sides), provided that it has a smooth finish and is paintable. Likewise, synthetic trim can be applied in limited locations that are consistently exposed to moisture, such as the fascia board behind gutters.

Later Buildings (post-1931)

Composite siding such as fiber cement can be used on all sides, provided that it has a smooth finish and is paintable.

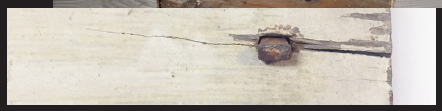
Steps for Siding Analysis

Intact historic siding may be hidden beneath layers of siding, such as aluminum, vinyl, artificial brick, or stone. To determine if multiple layers of siding exist, remove at least one portion a minimum of 2 feet by 2 feet to reveal the first layer of siding. Staff will inspect the mock-up in the field prior to any approval. The graphic on the following page gives an overview of this process.

STEP 1

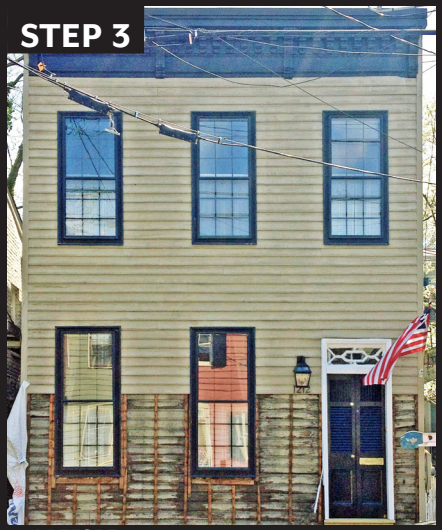
Carefully remove a 2 foot by 2 foot portion of the surface siding.

STEP 2



Using clues such as the siding profile and the type of nails used, Staff makes a determination on the age of the siding.

STEP 3



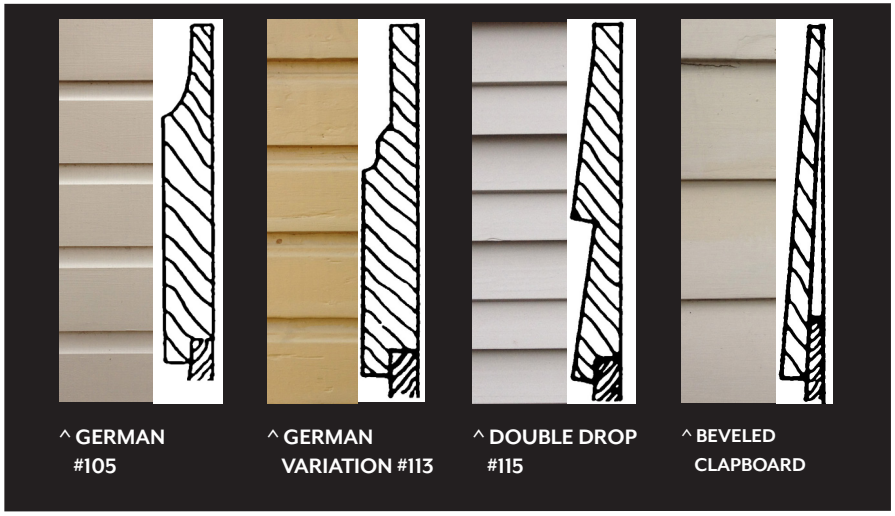
^ BEFORE

More of the historic siding is exposed for Staff to assess its condition. In this case, the historic siding is in very good condition and will be stripped and painted for reuse on this building.

STEP 4

^ AFTER

In this case, removal of the contemporary siding also revealed ghost marks in the old paint from which the originial window and door trim was able to be recreated.



Common types of wood siding in the historic districts.

Additional Information

- A building permit is required from Code Administration for the replacement of over 100 square feet of siding in the historic districts.
- The Board recommends priming all sides of each clapboard before installation and installing rain screen sleepers to promote ventilation on the back side.
- While the Board does not regulate paint color, Staff can provide you with a list of historically appropriate colors.
- The Board discourages blow-in foam insulation that permanently adheres to the historic framing and siding.
- Restoring historic wood siding is often less expensive and more eco-friendly than buying all new material.

Additional Resources

National Park Service Preservation Brief #22: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stucco