



# Village of Roslyn Historic District Board

## GUIDELINES FOR EXTERIOR WOODWORK



*Wood is the prominent exterior material for both residential and commercial buildings in the Village of Roslyn.*

### PURPOSE

These *Guidelines* were prepared to assist property owners with information when considering the repair, alteration or installation of exterior woodwork, trim and porches. They are not intended to replace consultation with qualified architects, contractors and the Historic District Board (HDB). The HDB will be happy to provide a preliminary consultation addressing design or materials issues to potential applicants free of charge.

These *Guidelines* were developed in conjunction with the Incorporated Village of Roslyn's Historic District Board (HDB). The HDB reviews Permit applications for proposed exterior alterations to properties within the Historic District. The applicant is responsible for complying with the provisions of the Zoning and Building Codes at the time of application. The applicant must obtain all necessary permits prior to proceeding with any work. For more information, or to obtain permit applications, please call the Building Department at (516) 621-1961.

Please review this information during the early stages of planning your project. Familiarity with this material can assist in moving a project quickly through the approval process, saving applicants both time and money. Additional *Guidelines* addressing other historic building topics are available at Village Hall and on its web site at [www.historicroslyn.org](http://www.historicroslyn.org).

### EXTERIOR WOODWORK

Wood siding, shingles and trim on a building's wall surface serve both functional and aesthetic purposes. Functionally, exterior woodwork acts as the skin of the building, shedding water and deflecting sunlight and wind. Aesthetically, woodwork is an important design feature and can be applied as siding, shingles, ornamental trim, and larger elements such as porches, and cupolas. Exterior woodwork:

- Establishes a weather-tight enclosure, providing protection from rain, wind and sun
- Is affected by temperature variation and building movement
- Establishes a building's scale, mass and proportion
- Acts as an important design feature, helping to define a building's architectural style
- Adds visual interest to the streetscape
- Adds pattern and casts shadows on wall surfaces

With proper maintenance, exterior wood elements can last for centuries, however improper maintenance can result in problems and deterioration from water, fungus, mold and insects.



*This house features a variety of exterior woodwork elements and details that are highlighted by the two-toned paint scheme.*



The original building to the left has clapboard siding, and the later addition, located to the right, has novelty siding.

## COMMON SIDING TYPES

The most common type of wood siding in the Village of Roslyn is clapboard with German siding being more unusual.

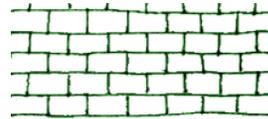
- **Clapboard Siding**, also known as weatherboard or beveled siding, is made from long boards, tapered across the width. Clapboard is installed by nailing an upper board overlapping a lower board with joints staggered across the wall surface. The boards are usually nailed to allow approximately four inches of exposure, or visible board surface.
- **Novelty Siding**, also known as drop siding, is a flat faced board with a concave top and notched bottom. Novelty siding is installed by nailing the notched bottom of the upper board over the concave top of the lower board in a staggered joint pattern.

Historically, the two most traditional types of wood siding for secondary buildings are vertical board and board and batten siding. Traditionally, most secondary buildings were also painted red.

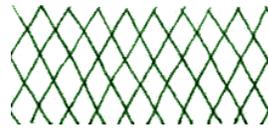
- **Vertical Board Siding**, also known as vertical plank siding, is made from long wide boards fastened vertically across a façade.
- **Board and Batten Siding** is similar to vertical board siding, although the joints between the wide vertical boards are covered with narrow boards or trim known as battens.

## WOOD TRIM AND ORNAMENT

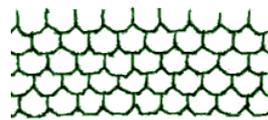
Visually, exterior wood trim frames areas of wood siding or shingles and serves as the transition to decorative elements such as doors, windows, cornices and porches. Functionally, it seals siding and shingles at joints, corners and openings, providing a weather-tight building enclosure. Wood trim includes window and door frames, corner boards, rake boards and wood sills. In addition to wood trim, there are numerous types of wood ornaments applied to buildings, including porch posts and columns, brackets, balustrades, newel posts, spindles, and other decorative details.



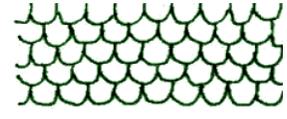
Chisel or Bevel



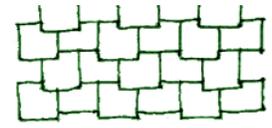
Diamond



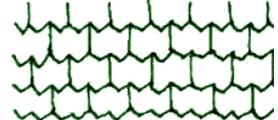
Octagonal



Fishscale



Staggered



Sawtooth

## COMMON SHINGLE TYPES

Although not as common as siding, there are a variety of wood shingled wall surfaces in the Village of Roslyn. Similar to clapboard siding, wood shingles are tapered and installed in an overlapping pattern with staggered joints to minimize potential moisture infiltration. Types of wood shingles include:

- Chisel or Bevel:** Rectangular shape, similar to roof shingles
- Fishscale:** Bottom shingle edge cut in a U shape with multiple rows forming a fishscale pattern
- Diamond:** Bottom shingle edge cut in a V shape with multiple rows forming a diamond pattern
- Staggered:** Chisel or beveled shingles with alternating greater and lesser exposure
- Octagonal:** Bottom shingle corners cut with 45° angle with multiple rows forming an octagonal pattern
- Sawtooth:** Bottom shingle edge cut in a W shape with adjacent shingles forming a sawtooth pattern



This house features octagonal and diamond shingles at the gable end as well as decorative rake boards and paired brackets.



*Exterior woodwork laid on a horizontal plane or located close to the ground is highly susceptible to deterioration such as this porch example. Ongoing exposure to moisture deteriorated the column bases, porch deck and apron. The green bloom is biological growth, probably algae, indicating the presence of moisture.*

## EXTERIOR WOODWORK CHECKLIST

Property owners generally do not notice their exterior woodwork unless a problem occurs, or there is desire to improve the appearance or reduce maintenance. Typical exterior woodwork concerns include lack of regular maintenance, peeling paint, rot or deterioration, infestation, and loose, cracked or missing elements. Property owners will often hide these problems with materials such as vinyl without addressing the root cause of the problem, resulting in further deterioration.

The actual condition of un-maintained exterior wood is generally better than its appearance. In addition, a deteriorated component or area typically does not necessitate the replacement or covering of all exterior woodwork. In most instances, selective repair or replacement of damaged parts and implementation of a regular maintenance program is all that is required. Full exterior woodwork replacement or encapsulation with artificial siding is rarely necessary and should be avoided whenever possible.

*The HDB encourages:*

- **Conducting semi-annual inspections** of all exterior wood elements to verify condition and determine maintenance needs. Look for signs of deterioration including excessive paint peeling that might indicate moisture problems. Look for veins of dirt on the exterior walls that might be termite mud tunnels. (See Wood Rot section.) Clean exterior surfaces annually in warm weather with a garden hose, household detergent and a bristle scrub brush. Avoid using power washers that can force water into wall cavities through crevices and damage decorative details.

- **Maintaining and repainting** exterior woodwork on a regular basis. A good quality paint job can last 5 to 8 years. For best results, address any moisture or deterioration problems prior to painting. Hand scrape and sand where possible to avoid removing or damaging decorative details with power tools or burning. Apply high quality and compatible primer and paint to clean and dry surfaces. Paint colors and luster should be appropriate to the style of the building. Refer to *Guidelines for Exterior Painting* for more painting information.
- **Repairing smaller areas of deterioration** by reinforcing or patching as required. Small cracks and checks can be repaired with an exterior wood filler, glue or epoxy. Loose elements can be refastened with careful nailing or drilling.
- **Selective replacement** of deteriorated wood elements when they are beyond repair. The replacement wood pieces should be the same size, profile and character of the historic wood element. It might be helpful to take a sample of the historic wood to the lumber yard or millwork shop for the best match. Wood filler between the seams of the new and old wood will help provide a smooth finish.
- **Replacement** of all exterior wood might be necessary if deterioration of exterior woodwork is severe and extensive. Decorative woodwork should be retained whenever possible since it is a character defining element that can be difficult and costly to replace. Replacement wood element should have the same visual characteristics as the historic woodwork including the size, profile and visual characteristics. Replacement siding materials should be installed in the original pattern being as careful as possible to match the original exposures.

*The HDB discourages:*

- Removing or encapsulating of siding, trim, decorative features and trim elements such as brackets, spindles, cornices, columns, posts, etc.

## HIRING A CONTRACTOR

- Repair, maintenance, installation and painting of siding can be potentially dangerous work and should be left to professionals
- All contractors are not necessarily experienced in all materials
- Verify extent of warranty for materials and labor
- Check references, especially from 5 years prior, to understand how well work has held up

## WOOD ROT

Almost all wood rot is caused by fungi that break down dead wood to return it back to the earth. Spores of decaying fungi are continuously produced and airborne at the interior and exterior of buildings. Rot-causing fungi need four basic elements to thrive: oxygen, moisture, food and moderate temperatures. If any of these elements are missing, rot can be controlled.

Since oxygen and moderate temperatures are prevalent in the environment, and most historic buildings are full of wood, an excellent food source, the best hope to minimize rot is to control moisture. Moisture-causing rot generally comes from one of four sources: ground water, rain and snow, plumbing leaks and condensation.

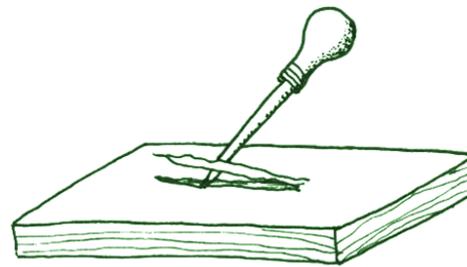
**Ground water** can migrate from the soil into the house by: direct contact between wood and soil; improper drainage away from the foundation; vegetation too close to the foundation; water vapor condensation in crawl spaces; and capillary action or rising damp in masonry foundation walls carrying water several inches up to wood sills.

**Rain and snow** can find its way into a building through crevices and be confined within a wall cavity. Exterior surfaces with open joints or those that are not protected by paint, caulk or mortar are subject to water infiltration. Blocked or undersized gutters and downspouts can overflow and direct water towards building surfaces. Rainwater splashing on hard ground surfaces can rebound, saturating exterior woodwork. Ice build-up along roof eaves without appropriate flashing could back-up under shingles and melt.

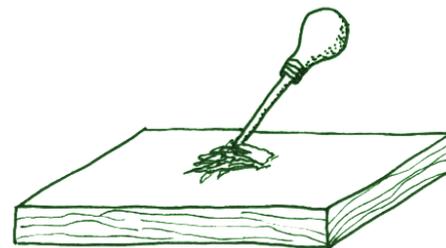
**Leaky plumbing** is generally sudden, such as a cracked pipe; or slow, where a gradual, unnoticed leak can soak a wood structure until significant damage occurs. Cracks in grout and tiles on floors and around bathtubs, sinks and washing machines can admit enough water to rot wood framing. Periodic inspections for signs of leaking behind bathtub access panels, within sink vanities, and around washing machines and dishwashers can help to catch a problem earlier.

**Condensation** is an insidious source of moisture since the water comes from air vapor rather than an obvious source such as rain or a cracked pipe. Condensation occurs when warm moist air contacts a cold surface. Warm air can hold more moisture than cold air. If warm moist air comes in contact with a cold surface that is below the dew point temperature, the excess moisture changes to water droplets on the cold surface. Some common areas for condensation include:

- Crawl spaces beneath a building where water can condense on framing members such as sills and joists, especially in corners with poor air circulation and if the building is air conditioned in the summer – Plastic sheathing on the ground is recommended
- Cold water pipes in humid weather – Pipe insulation is recommended
- Window panes – Re-caulking of existing storm windows or new storm windows are recommended
- High humidity in kitchens, bathrooms and laundries – Exhaust fans and exterior clothes dryer vents are recommended
- Wood deterioration atop foundation – Wall insulation with an interior-facing vapor barrier and interior humidity control is recommended



*Less penetration and long splinters are an indication of healthy wood*



*Greater penetration and short splinters against the grain are a possible indication of rot*

## DETECTING WOOD ROT

A simple means of testing for rot is to stab the wood member perpendicular to the grain with an awl or ice pick. Then measure the penetration depth and evaluate the type of splintering using the following criteria:

- If the penetration is less than ¼ inch, the component does not need replacement
- If the penetration is more than ½ inch, the component might need replacement
- If long splinters are produced, the wood is healthy and the component does not need replacement
- If short sections broken across the grain are produced, the component might need replacement

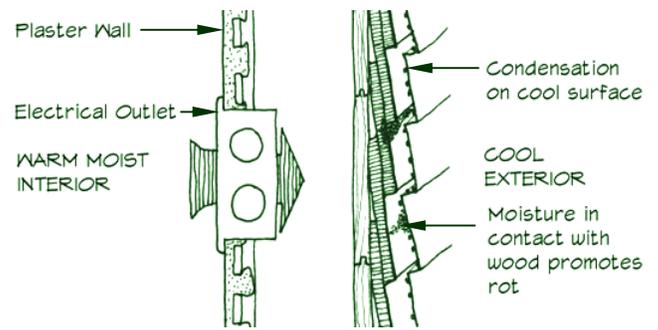


*After removal of the corner boards (peeling white paint at the top of the image), this post appeared to be in relatively good condition (refer to bottom of picture) until additional exploration revealed the interior of the post was completely deteriorated. It is like that a persistent leak at the juncture of the roof gutter and downspout exasperated the situation.*

## DECAY-RESISTENT WOOD

Although there are no woods that prohibit rot, there are some woods available that are naturally decay resistant, while others have a higher propensity to rot. These naturally decay-resistant woods tend to be denser than woods such as pine. In some cases, these naturally decay-resistant woods are more expensive than common woods, but are not necessarily all suited for all uses, such as detailed trim work. Therefore, it is important to understand the proposed location and final finish when selecting wood for a project. Locally available decay-resistant woods include:

- Spanish cedar
- Mahogany
- Redwood
- Pressure treated wood for framing members



## CONDENSATION

As a result of changes in our living standards, condensation has become a significant problem in historic buildings. Today's buildings include central heating and air conditioning to stabilize temperatures and relative humidity, and insulation that can trap moisture. Buildings also include moisture-intensive conveniences such as plumbing, bathrooms, and laundry and cooking facilities. While interior conditions have stabilized and moisture laden activities increased, exterior temperatures and relative humidity are continuously changing.

The differences in temperature and relative humidity between the interior and exterior of our buildings are distributed through the thicknesses of exterior building walls. If the temperature is below the dew point at any location within the wall, condensation will occur causing the moisture to change into water droplets. Installing artificial siding over wood can exacerbate this problem and hide deterioration until it is very severe. Unlike wood, vinyl and aluminum siding do not "breathe" and can trap moisture within a building's wall cavity, leading to rot, mold and insect damage of the wood structure. Therefore, it is important to inspect and repair potential water sources to minimize the moisture within the wall cavity.

## REMOVING ARTIFICIAL SIDING

Some Roslyn Village residents have removed artificial siding and restored underlying woodwork. Artificial siding removal allows buildings to function as originally designed and exposes problems that might have developed since its installation. If removing artificial siding from woodwork:

- Expect to replace about 20% of woodwork
- Expect surprises such as removed details and trim
- Sell aluminum siding for recycling



*Aluminum capping has been installed over the window frame. Aluminum capping usually lacks the profile and detail of wood trim. It can also trap moisture within the wall surface that can accelerate rot and deterioration.*

*The window frame has been completely covered with the vinyl siding. The articulation formerly provided by the frame has been eliminated. Without the frame, the visual dimensions of the window are changed and character of the building diminished.*



## WOOD TRIM AND ARTIFICIAL SIDING

Most historic buildings usually have significant wood door and window frames, moldings and trim that can be removed, damaged or concealed in inappropriate artificial siding installations. The loss of these features can significantly alter the character of a building and streetscape.

Artificial siding installation over existing materials can increase the wall thickness, causing the existing wood trim to appear set back from the wall rather than projecting from it. This also diminishes the visual characteristics of the building.

*The HDB encourages:*

- Maintaining existing exterior woodwork including siding and trim
- Replacing deteriorated woodwork with new wood to match existing

*The HDB discourages:*

- Installing artificial siding over existing exterior woodwork
- Installing synthetic materials for trim and architectural details



*The wood siding remains under the aluminum siding.*



*Porches provide a sheltered transition into a home and should complement the style of the house.*

## PORCHES

The rich architectural variety of the Village of Roslyn is distinguished by its collection of porches. Historically, porches were an outside room where residents could find a sheltered transition into their homes, exterior living space, and a place to meet and converse with neighbors. When they were constructed, the form, details and decorative elements were often intended to complement the style of the house.

Porches remain one of the most visible house elements and play a significant role in its appearance and that of the streetscape. They can act as an extension of a home providing a welcoming feeling for visitors. Unfortunately porches today are often one of the most altered components of a building frequently because they are not properly maintained or they are viewed as potentially enclosable indoor space.

### LOOKING FOR EVIDENCE OF PRIOR PORCHES

It is important that documentation be found when replacing a missing porch. This can be physical evidence that a porch was present or documentation that shows or describes a porch.

- Look for shadows on the wall or trim from roofs, posts or railings, evidence of nailing patterns on siding, repairs to masonry walls, and evidence of former porch piers or foundations in landscape
- Look for historic photos, drawings or maps and in attics and garages for original components
- Compare porches on neighboring buildings of similar type, design, style and date of construction

## PORCH GUIDELINES

*The HDB encourages:*

- Painting porches regularly to preserve the wood
- Retaining, repairing and replacing porch elements in-kind whenever possible
- Rebuilding a porch with appropriate documentation
- A painted finish complementing the architectural characteristics of the house – Refer to *Guidelines for Exterior Painting* (Pressure-treated wood can be painted after its initial weathering period)

*The HDB discourages:*

- Enclosing a porch at the front of a building
- Installing metal posts and railings; they are almost never appropriate for a historic building
- Replacing wood steps with concrete or brick – wood steps are typically appropriate for wood porches
- Using “natural” or stained wood; they are generally not appropriate for a porch on a painted historic building



*Following the removal of aluminum siding at the Peter L. Snedecker House on Old Northern Boulevard by the Roslyn Preservation Corporation in 1998-99, evidence of the former, full-width porch at the front elevation and upper level shingles was revealed. The evidence about the former porch was used to provide the basis for the construction of the replacement porch. (Photograph provided by John M. Collins.)*

## MAINTAINING HISTORIC PORCHES

Because of the importance porches play in the perception of historic buildings and streetscapes, original materials and details should be preserved as long as possible. Typically areas covered by a porch roof tend to require less maintenance; however, steps, railings, and roofs are usually exposed to the weather and might require additional maintenance. One of the best ways to preserve wood porch features is regular painting. If a component is deteriorating, repair or replacement in kind is recommended as part of the porch’s regular maintenance.

*The HDB encourages:*

1. Identifying deteriorated elements
2. Finding and correcting sources of deteriorated elements, such as deteriorated, cracked, blocked, inappropriately hung, broken or missing gutters or downspouts
3. Replacing only those parts which can not be repaired – in some instances, such as columns and posts, the base can be replaced without replacing the entire column or post at a fraction of the cost
4. Replacing missing or deteriorated materials with similar new materials, avoiding replacement of a wood railing with a metal or vinyl railing system

*The HDB encourages:*

- Repairing damaged elements using standard repair techniques for that material (Refer to the *Guideline* brochures appropriate for each material) and restoring the porch to its original historic appearance
- Replacing only the original elements that can not be repaired using elements of the same material, size, profile and other visual characteristics
- If a substantial portion of the porch is deteriorated and cannot be repaired or replicated, or if a porch is missing, creating a simplified design using stock lumber and moldings that convey similar visual characteristics as the original porch, duplicating the dimensions and materials but not necessarily the detailing

### PORCH REPAIR INFORMATION

Since many of the components of porches are discussed in depth in other *Guideline* brochures, it might be helpful to consult the following information to address specific repair needs:

- *Guidelines for Roofing*
- *Guidelines for Masonry & Stucco*

## GUIDELINES FOR NEW PORCHES

There are times when property owners might consider the construction of a new porch. This can occur when a previous porch is reconstructed; a new porch is added onto an existing house or is part of an addition; or when a new residence is erected. If considering the construction of a new porch, the HDB recommends the following general guidelines:

- New porches are encouraged on streets where porches are common
- At existing buildings, new construction should not damage, destroy, conceal or negatively affect existing historic material and features
- On additions, porches should be simple in design and relate to the existing building
- Side and rear elevation porches are typically simpler in design than front elevation porches
- On new buildings, porches should visually relate to the proposed building in a manner similar to historic porches on neighboring buildings
- Consider the size, shape, scale, massing, form, materials, and color of the design and its appropriateness to the house and streetscape
- Most porches in Roslyn Village were historically made of wood; stone or brick porches might only be appropriate only on masonry buildings



*Porches are typically the closest portion of the building to the street and are experienced from both sides. Details, such as this unusual balustrade, can make a significant difference in their appearance and should be preserved. Note the column base holes providing both drainage and ventilation.*



*Porch enclosures that are attached to existing decorative porch elements, such as this column, can cause damage that is both difficult and costly to repair.*

## ENCLOSING PORCHES

Porches were meant to be open exterior spaces. Enclosing a front porch is a radical change to the building and its visual perception from the streetscape. If considering porch enclosure, it is recommended that this occur only at a side or rear elevation porch. If enclosing a porch, it is recommended that the finished space look more like a porch than an enclosed room.

*The HDB encourages:*

- Retaining porch elements in place and constructing enclosure framing inside of porch columns and railings
- Temporary enclosure systems, such as screens or glazing that can be removed seasonally
- Reversible enclosure systems that do not damage decorative or unique historic building fabric
- Translucent enclosure systems, with large screened or glazed openings
- Vertical and horizontal framing members that align behind porch elements like columns and railings

*The HDB discourages:*

- Enclosing porches, particularly at the front elevation



This publication was initiated and overseen by the Incorporated Village of Roslyn and the Roslyn Landmarks Society. This project was made possible through a grant provided by the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA). However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the NYSCA nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the NYSCA.

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