

LANDMARK LINK

The newsletter of the Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission.

Historic windows: Repair or replace?

Over the past two decades, the replacement window industry has flourished as homeowners have attempted to save money by making their homes as energy efficient as possible. For homeowners seeking advice on how to deal with window problems, a trip to the yellow pages usually results in a sales pitch for replacement windows and little else. However, life cycle cost analysis has shown that replacing historic windows in order to reduce heating costs is largely a myth. Below is an example of one of these studies.

Maintenance

There is no question that windows of any type require maintenance. Windows have to be washed and painted on a regular basis. If these basic maintenance requirements are neglected, costs to repair glass and sash can escalate. Ornate historic windows (and even simple historic windows) were built extremely well with effective water shedding features and old growth timber. When properly maintained, they can last forever.

“Maintenance Free” is industry double-speak for un-maintainable or disposable. It is true that vinyl or aluminum-clad windows don’t require the routine painting that wood does, but it is not unusual for them to experience major, non-repairable failures to fogging of insulating glass, breaks in vinyl welds, sealant and joints within



10-25 years. Today, most insulating glass units provide warranties of only 8-10 years. In a 1995 issue of Glass Magazine by Ted Hart, he states that “our industry, with rare exception, has chosen to hide the fact that insulating glass does have a life expectancy.”

Environment

“Green” building is about using fewer non-renewable resources. It is not only about reducing your monthly energy bill, but also about the overall impact to the environment. When old windows are stacked on the curb for disposal, fuel is required to take them to a landfill. New vinyl and aluminum windows contain a large amount

of so-called “embodied energy” because they require substantial energy to manufacture and transport to the job site. And finally, vinyl is a non-renewable petroleum product that is not biodegradable. In 25 years, when they themselves need replacement, they cannot be recycled.

Payback

Payback on investment of replacement residential windows usually falls within 40 to 100 years. That is commonly two to four times the service life of new windows. With good storm windows and regular maintenance, historic windows oftentimes meet or exceed the energy payback of new replacement windows, thereby negating any benefit of replacement at all.

Repairing and retrofitting windows is a sustainable course of action that both maintains the aesthetic and historic character and continuity of neighborhoods and respects the environment. Historic windows add to the quality, charm and resale value of your home and enhance the overall visual appeal of Oak Park.

More information is available by contacting the Oak Park Historic Preservation commission or consulting a preservation architect or contractor.

Sources: News from the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions. Article by Susan Turner, Architect, Ann Arbor Michigan

Weatherizing your historic home

Weatherizing your home in the winter won't just keep money in your pocket and your heat where you want it – it will also put people back to work. That has been President Barack Obama's message to Congress as they consider major jobs legislation to get hard-hit Americans back on payroll.

While the National Trust for Historic Preservation and other preservation organizations around the country have applauded this strategy to stimulate jobs by conserving energy and are enthusiastic about potential opportunities for increasing training and employment of preservation trades, they realize that a misguided bill could lead to a lot of wrongdoing to our nation's biggest category of places that matter – older and historic homes. Because of this, the National Trust has prepared a detailed list of policy recommendations that supports the President's vision and, among other things, prevents unintentional and unnecessary damage to older and historic buildings and their character-defining features.

Find the recommendations online at www.preservationnation.org/take-action/advocacy-center/homestar.html.

The National Trust also has created a *Weatherization Guide for Older and Historic Buildings* www.preservationnation.org/issues/



[weatherization](#) that has helpful information on financial programs and incentives, energy audits, and tons of great downloads on topics including window replacement, roofing and mechanical systems.

Be sure to check out some of their downloadable information available on the web site that can guide you as you consider how to make your home more energy efficient, such as *Top 10 Reasons Why Historic Windows Matter*, *15 Easy Steps to Prepare Your Home for Winter*, *Incentives Guide* and other resources.

Source: National Trust for Historic Preservation

The DIY Energy Audit

Historic homeowners should also conduct a home energy audit. This will detail exactly where a home's trouble spots are located. A basic evaluation can be performed by using the *Department of Energy's Home Energy Savers web site* at: www.hes.lbl.gov.

Source: Old-House Journal

Help Oak Park preserve its past Strategic Historic Preservation Plan

The Historic Preservation Commission is leading a community wide effort to create a 10-year Strategic Historic Preservation Plan to help guide efforts to identify and protect important historic resources throughout the Village of Oak Park.

The following is the meeting schedule to create this plan. All meetings begin at 7 p.m.

Jan. 12, 2009: Community Workshop II, Hatch School, 1000 N. Ridgeland Ave.

Feb. 17, 2010: Steering Committee meeting III, Oak Park Conservatory, 615 Garfield St.

March 17, 2010: Community Workshop III, Beye School, 230 N. Cuyler Ave.

For more information, call 708.358.5417 or e-mail planning@oak-park.us

www.oak-park.us/planning/Historic_Preservation_strategicplan.htm

Historic Preservation Commission Members

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Joerg Albrecht

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Kristen Diamond

Chris Morris

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Drew Niermann

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Carmen Vitello

The Historic Preservation Commission is an 11-member body of citizen volunteers appointed by the Village President to implement the Village's Historic Preservation Ordinance. Its mission is to preserve, protect and enhance the distinctive historic and architectural heritage of Oak Park. The Commission strives to preserve the historic integrity of the Village by reviewing altera-

tions of the exteriors of historic properties to ensure that the historic character of the building exteriors is preserved. The Commission also identifies landmark buildings and historic districts, and seeks to enhance the attractiveness of the Village by educating property owners and citizens about the importance of preservation, restoration and rehabilitation of properties.

www.oak-park.us/Community_Services/Historic_Preservation.html

The Historic Preservation Commission is looking for more volunteers!

For more information, call 708.358.5417 or e-mail planning@oak-park.us.