

# PRESERVING THE CHARACTER OF YOUR HOUSE



## Houses and History

Saint Paul's residential neighborhoods reflect its history and early growth, where factory workers and local merchants lived, worked, worshipped, and went to school.

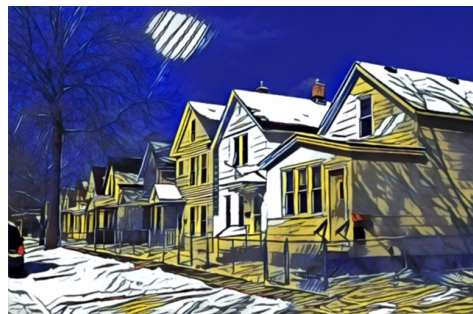
The builders of our city's traditional houses carried different toolboxes with them in their daily work – one held saws, hammers, brace-and-bit drills and plenty of nails. The other held an understanding of architecture and craftsmanship – a knowledge of how to build houses with livable floor plans, and the tradition of making simple dwellings that could express the character of prevailing architectural styles – Victorian, Italianate and Bungalow.

Today, these houses survive to serve as building blocks for the sustainable neighborhoods of tomorrow. Their steep roofs, wide window and door trim, ornamental details, and old growth materials bring a sense of history and irreplaceable character to the shelters we can call home.

## Did you know?

Renovating your home with respect for the past protects the equity you're building for the future.

And, while keeping the original character of your home intact, you also can save money and energy.



## GENERAL GUIDELINES:

Preserve and repair original exterior and interior materials and details. They add character, integrity, and appeal.

Original siding and trim may be hiding behind manufactured siding and trim - and are often preserved in good condition. If some parts or features are damaged or missing, repair or replace them to match to the extent possible.

Avoid adding features that are not appropriate to the age and style of your house.

## Consistency is the key

Your house is more likely to hold its value when you maintain the original size, shape, materials and detail of its features.

## Concentrate on what shows

Directing your most careful renovation efforts in areas with high visibility brings added interest to your neighborhood.

## Little things mean a lot

Each decision has an impact on your home's character. A collection of misguided changes can result in an unappealing patchwork of mismatched parts.

## Think incrementally

Renovation can be more rewarding (and financially feasible) when you don't try to do it all at once. Develop and implement a long and short-term plan.

## Added value

Homes that preserve trim, detailing and other original design features are more attractive to buyers.

## Energy Savings

Sensitive renovation can be energy efficient. You can often achieve the same energy savings at less cost by fixing what you have.

## Roofs

A good roof system keeps your home dry, saves energy and adds visual definition to your home. Maintain its original shape and form and retain and/or match features such as cornices, brackets and mouldings. The roof is one of the most critical areas of heat loss and gain. You can often save energy and the expense of roof replacement, by insulating and air sealing the roof you have. Venti-lating the attic for proper airflow will also save on energy bills.

## Exterior Walls

Covering original wood, brick, stucco or stone exterior walls can cost you both now and later! Repair your exterior walls using materials that closely match the original in size, style and finish. Preserve original siding width and details such as window trim, cornice, brackets, sill and corner boards. Artificial siding may hide imperfections, but it can also conceal character and detract from the value of your home. In addition, aluminum or vinyl siding can break, dent, rust or discolor and require cleaning, repair or replacement.

**Paint** - Good preparation (including scraping loose paint) and using high-quality paint are the keys to a long-lasting paint job. Power-washing is generally not necessary; if you do do it, be sure to wait at least several days to let the house dry out. And don't paint when the temperature drops too much - check the specifications for the paint you're using and pay attention to the length of time the air temperature should stay above a certain figure to allow for adequate curing of the paint.

## Porches and Entryways

Entry areas create the strongest first impression of your home. A porch also serves as an outdoor relaxation area and a transition from public to private spaces. Maintain porch details such as spindles and wood trim. Repair rather than replace features whenever possible, especially trim that is hard to replicate around doors, steps, columns and handrails. Keep the existing size and shape of your porch and doorway. Avoid closing in sidelights or transoms when you repair or replace your door. When adding storm or screen doors, match the size and shape of the existing door. To save on energy bills - and the expense of a new door - weather-strip and caulk original doors to improve the seal and eliminate drafts. If it becomes necessary to replace or recreate major components of your porch or entryway, work with a professional to develop a sensitive plan and suggest appropriate replacement materials.

## Windows

If your windows are basically sound, repairing them is usually much more cost-effective than replacement. Preserve original windows and window openings where possible. Retain or replicate original wood trim and detailing. Avoid window replacements that reduce window size or strip away or cover original design features. YOU CAN SAVE nearly as much energy by adding storm windows and weather-stripping as you can by adding new windows. AND at far LESS COST!



## Quick Maintenance Checklist:

### Roofs

Check twice a year for loose or missing materials, leaks, and signs of interior dampness or peeling paint. Lock out moisture.

### Walls

Check each spring for peeling paint, loose bricks or mortar and gaps in siding. Prevent wood-rot and decay.

### Windows

Check for drafts at window and frame at the beginning of each heating and cooling season.

### Porches

Check for rotting wood, wobbly railings, floor areas that collect water. Touch up paint as needed. Make sure roof and gutters are working properly to keep your porch dry.

### Doors

Check for gaps around door and frame. Replace weather stripping as needed.

### Overall

Hire contractors who specialize in working with traditional materials. If you're unsure what to do, consider getting professional design advice.

For more information on window repair visit:

<https://savingplaces.org/stories/preservation-tips-tools-retrofitting-historic-windows#.WMgbEvLl91A>  
<https://savingplaces.org/stories/10-tuesday-toolkit-round-green-historic-home-edition#.WMgbDPLl91A>