

Appendix C to Item 4(b) of Planning Committee Report 14-016

GUIDELINES ON CONSERVING ORIGINAL WINDOWS IN HERITAGE BUILDINGS

Date: November 2014

Written by: Hamilton Municipal Heritage Committee (HMHC)
Policy and Design Subcommittee

Summary:

Our community recognizes the tragedy when heritage buildings are demolished but we sometimes fail to realize that there is a risk in losing even more by attrition; i.e. once the porch is changed, the interior remodelled, and the siding, windows and doors are replaced; is it really a heritage building any more?

Heritage windows are the eyes of a building and the jewel like qualities of original glass, speaks to the hand-crafted quality that is lost in the crisp lines of modern mass produced window units, often clad in metal or vinyl.

The Hamilton Municipal Heritage Committee (HMHC) encourages the retention, repair and thermal upgrade of original windows in heritage buildings.

Windows help define the character of buildings. Their appearance, placement, materials and design details all tell us something about the building they are a part of. If the original windows of a heritage building are changed or replaced, some of this character is lost.

Frequently Asked Questions:

If you are thinking of replacing your heritage windows; here's what you need to know!

1. Why is it important to retain and repair original heritage windows?

There are a number of reasons why it is important to retain and repair original windows:

- Good heritage conservation practice entails returning a building to good health and maintaining a much of the original fabric as possible in order to conserve its sense of age and authenticity;
- Windows clearly define the character, style and architectural period through such details as moulding profiles and glazing pattern;
- A program of window repair and upgrade is often cheaper than total replacement.

2. What are the benefits of repairing windows heritage windows

Repairing and upgrading existing windows, instead of replacing them, has environmental, social and economic benefits:

- It can increase the monetary value of the house;
- It can save energy and money over the long run;
- It can conserve the heritage value of the house;
- It can add to the value of the neighbourhood.

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3. What about maintenance?

- Heritage windows do require maintenance. Activities such as paint spot maintenance, repainting, or touching up glazing putty need to be done on a regular, cyclical basis.
- Heritage windows are maintainable. Almost anything that goes wrong with them can be repaired.
- Products advertised as “Maintenance-free” are often un-maintainable and become disposable. For example: broken proprietary hardware may no longer be available, the seals in a modern insulated glass often fail and sometimes require that the entire sash be replaced and the colour of vinyl or aluminum cladding eventually fades.
- Heritage materials such as lumber cut from old growth virgin forests which have a superior stability and weather resistant properties, will often outlast replacement materials.
- The fact that so many heritage buildings still have their original windows 150 years later is a testament to the quality of the material and construction.

4. What about energy efficiency?

- When people talk about energy efficiency in the context of windows, they are typically concerned about cold air blowing in, cold drafts off the surface of the glass and condensation resistance.
- With the use of quality weather stripping, on operating joints, the use of sealants on fixed joints and repairs to broken glass and glazing putty, drafts can be controlled.
- With the addition of another piece of glass, such as traditional storm window or a storm panel on the interior, condensation can be controlled.
- Heritage windows can be upgraded to acceptable standards, comparable to most modern windows.

5. What about the cost?

- A program of window repair and upgrade is often cheaper than total replacement.
- It is important to look at the life cycle cost analysis of repair vs. replacement over 20 years; factoring in the capital cost, the thermal upgrade, maintenance costs and energy savings as well as the lifetime of that product.
- The repair of existing heritage windows can not always be compared directly to the replacement of windows.

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- Many modern replacement windows will show signs of failure within 10 years and require total replacement in 15-20 years.
- More energy and time will be spent replacing a modern window that maintaining an existing heritage window.

6. What are the environmental impacts?

- Restoring and repairing existing windows is the environmentally responsible choice. It conserves the materials used in the original windows and avoids the unnecessary fabrication and transportation of new materials. It also means that repairable windows aren't sent to landfills.
- Wood windows are usually made from old –growth wood, which is more durable and stable than wood today. The hardware used in older windows also tends to be sturdier than its modern counterpart, and can stand up to repair and restoration work.
- Repairing and restoring existing windows – instead of replacing them with windows manufactured in some other location – supports local workers and craftsman. Work that is done locally also helps local contractors learn restoration skills.
- It is better to reuse existing materials. The processing of materials such as aluminum and vinyl have harmful effects on the environment.

7. When is it appropriate to replace original windows?

The replacement of original windows in heritage buildings is only justifiable typically for the following reasons:

- The original windows have previously been replaced with units that detract from the heritage character of the building;
- The original windows are so severely deteriorated that, even if they were repaired, very little original fabric would remain.

8. If window replacement is justifiable (i.e. sometimes on less significant facades such as the rear), what should be considered?

- They should be custom made to replace the originals;
- Unique features such as material, moulding profiles, muntin bar sizes and the joinery should be matched precisely.

9. Who are the experts?

Learn as much as you can about your heritage windows:

- Contact a City of Hamilton Cultural Heritage Planner
- The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada -
<http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/pages/standards-norme>

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- Window Preservation Standards - <http://windowstandards.org/>
- Barriers to the Conservation of Pre-World War II Residential Wood Windows. - https://uwspace.uwaterloo.ca/bitstream/handle/10012/8592/Bea_n_Ronald_.pdf?sequence=3

10. What is a Heritage Permit?

- Once a property is designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, the City of Hamilton is enabled to manage physical changes to these heritage resources through the Heritage Permit process.
- Through the Heritage Permit process, the City reviews site-specific applications for property changes being proposed to determine how the proposed changes to a designated property may enhance or adversely affect the integrity of the heritage resource.
- For more information, please refer to the *Guide to Heritage Permits in the City of Hamilton*, available through the Development Planning, Heritage and Design Planning and Economic Development Department

11. What does it mean to “adversely affect” a heritage resource?

There are 2 types of adverse affects;

1. Changes that result in the damage or loss of heritage features or materials;
2. Changes that result in the disruption of the overall character of the heritage resource.

12. Do I need a Heritage Permit?

Yes - If your property is “designated” under the Ontario Heritage Act

Yes – if your property is located within one of the 7 Heritage Conservation Districts.

If you are unsure of whether or not you require a Heritage Permit, please contact a Cultural Heritage Planner in the Development Planning, Heritage and Design Planning and Economic Development Department.

13. Are there any grants available for heritage window repair and conservation?

- Heritage Property Grant Program. Available to all designated heritage properties located in downtown Hamilton or in any of the Business Improvement Areas across Hamilton;

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- The Hamilton Community Heritage Fund (HCHF) provides interest-free loans to a maximum of \$50,000 for restoration of heritage attributes on properties designated under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Making the Right Choice in 4 Easy Steps

1. Contact an expert such as a heritage consultant or window expert...BEWARE the sales person.
2. Assess the existing condition of your heritage windows.
3. Assess the problems (ex. Air leakage, water leakage, condensation build-up, aesthetics, etc.).
4. Assess the solutions...sometimes it's as easy as applying a bead of caulking!

For more advice or to discuss your project in more detail, please contact:

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