

WINDOW REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT FOR HISTORIC PROPERTIES

There are four basic steps for replacing windows on an historic building: 1) determining if the windows can be repaired rather than replace, 2) identifying the appropriate replacement windows, as needed, for your building, 3) finding a company that manufactures and installs windows, and 4) getting a DC building permit, with approval from the Historic Preservation Office (HPO). The HPO staff can help you with each of these steps, as can a qualified architect or contractor familiar with historic buildings. You should always consult with the HPO *prior* to ordering any windows or commencing with the work.

Window Repair

Windows are an important character-defining feature of any historic building, giving it a sense of scale, craftsmanship and proportion. If possible, original windows on historic buildings should be repaired rather than replaced. Existing windows can often be repaired, scraped of old paint, repainted and made more energy efficient with the installation of weather-stripping and/or insulated glazing at a fraction of the cost of installing replacement windows. This can be especially cost-effective for windows of an unusual shape or character that would be difficult and costly to replicate. Even if the operable sash is beyond repair, it may be possible to save the original frames and exterior trim.

Window Replacement

Proposals for replacement should clearly document the existing condition and appearance of the windows with photographs. If the windows on an historic building are beyond repair or are not original to the building, replacement may be warranted. The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) has adopted regulations requiring that any replacement window on a street-fronting elevation or which is highly visible from a public street must replicate the material, profile, dimensions, operability, and light configuration (the number and layout of glass panes) of the original windows. Vinyl windows cannot be approved on these visible elevations. The standards for replacement windows facing onto a rear yard, internal courtyard or lightwell that are not visible from a public street are more flexible.

The evolution of window and glass technology through the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as changing architectural styles, have resulted in a rich variety of window sizes, shapes, and designs. Accordingly, there is no single “right” replacement window suitable for all historic buildings. With photographs of your building, the HPO staff can help you determine the appropriate windows for your style of building.

The HPRB’s Window Standards (DCMR Title 10A, Chapter 23) may be accessed at www.planning.dc.gov or by calling the HPO at 442-8800.

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
OFFICE OF PLANNING

Sources for Window Repair and Replacement

Many of the window companies listed below offer sash replacement packages that are less expensive than full window replacements, while retention of the wood frames maintains much of the appearance of the original windows.

Window Repair

Bi-Glass	202-638-5737	(retrofits insulated glass into existing sash)
Craftsman Group	202-332-3325/-3700	(window repair, restoration and replication)
Alex Szopa	202-445-3039	(window repair, restoration and replication)
Mark Wesolowski	301-855-1913	(window repair and replication)
Stephen Ortado	202-437-7567/686-0135	(window repair)

New Wood Windows

The following are phone numbers and websites for the headquarters of some companies that make wood windows. *Pay close attention as you browse their catalogs. Although these companies manufacture wood windows, they also make other types of windows, many of which are not appropriate for historic buildings.* If you contact the company headquarters, they will give you the name of their local sales representative. Also, many of these window lines can be ordered through larger lumber suppliers, such as Smoot (703-823-2100), TW Perry (301-652-2600) or Galliher & Huguely (202-723-1000);

Eagle	800-453-3633	www.eaglewindows.com
Kolbe & Kolbe	715-842-5666	www.kolbeandkolbe.com
Lincoln	715-536-2461	www.lincolnwindows.com
Loewen Windows & Doors	613-822-6291	www.loewen-window-centre.com
MW Windows	800-999-9771	www.mwwindows.com
Marvin Windows & Doors	800-346-5128	www.marvin.com
Pella	800-597-3552	www.pella.com
Jeld-wen (incl. Pozzi & Norco)	800-257-9663	www.jeld-wen.com
TrimLine Windows Inc.	800-213-6100	www.trimlinewindows.com
Weathershield	800-222-2995	www.weathershield.com

Some of these companies provide installation services, while others simply provide the window for a contractor to install. Check the Yellow Pages under “Windows” for independent installers. As with any contractor, make sure the company is licensed and bonded in the District of Columbia, and can provide references of comparable work.

The Building Permit

Replacing windows in an historic district requires that you obtain a DC building permit. You will need: 1) photographs of the building sufficient to show the building and existing windows, and 2) information on the proposed replacements, such as a specification sheet or catalogue provided by the manufacturer, or architectural drawings. With those in hand, contact the HPO at 442-8800 and ask to speak to one of our staff, or come to the office at 801 North Capitol Street, NE in Suite 3000 any weekday between 9:00-5:00. We will provide you with the permit application, or you may download it at www.dkra.dc.gov (click on “permits” and then “building permit application”).