

# REPLACEMENT & SUBSTITUTE MATERIALS FOR HISTORIC STRUCTURES



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO  
**OFFICE OF HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION**

CITY OF SAN ANTONIO  
HISTORIC DESIGN GUIDELINES  
SUBSTITUTE MATERIALS POLICY DOCUMENT

DRAFT  
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# WHY DO MATERIALS MATTER?

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Your historic property was designed to be repaired over time. Original wood features such as siding, trim, windows, and foundation piers are not immune to deterioration over time. As individual building components are replaced over time, choosing an appropriate replacement material is essential to preserving the architectural integrity of a structure.

In many instances, matching replacement materials may no longer be available. New technology may also provide viable and sustainable alternatives to wood products when appropriate. When original materials are missing or deteriorated beyond repair, the Historic Design Guidelines encourages the use of in-kind (or same) materials or substitute materials that are similar in size, scale, and character as the original.

This policy document provides owners guidance on when a substitute material may be appropriate and what types of products are found to be consistent with the Historic Design Guidelines.



At all times, the Historic Design Guidelines, Chapter 2, Guidelines for Exterior Maintenance and Alterations should be followed. The removal and replacement of an original material should always be a last resort, and should receive a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Office of Historic Preservation.



**Did you know?** Old growth lumber is more dense, stronger, burns slower, and is more insect resistant than new lumber. Before considering a replacement material, be sure to consider the value in your existing building components! Repair with selective replacement of original materials is both environmentally sustainable and cost effective.

# PORCH DECKING

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Due to its exposure to the elements, porch decking is especially susceptible to rot and decay. Even modern-day, treated wood decking requires a rigorous maintenance and re-painting regimen in order to last through the years. Many property owners look to composite decking products as a low-maintenance and long-lasting substitute for traditional wood decking.

*Certain product specifications and installation methods have proven to be **consistent** with the Historic Design Guidelines and are eligible for administrative approval:*

- **Do** utilize individual decking boards that are 3 inches in width and 7/8 of an inch in height.
- **Do** utilize products with a smooth finish and tongue-and-groove profile which mimic the appearance of wood decking when painted.
- **Do** install decking boards "back-to-front" and with a slight slope toward the front of the porch.



*Actions which **remove or detract** from the architectural character of your historic property are not recommended and may be subject to HDRC review with no guarantee of approval:*

- **Do not** fully-replace original decking materials where a majority of original wood decking is intact and determined to be repairable.
- **Do not** utilize dimensional lumber that is inconsistent in size and appearance with historic tongue-and-groove decking.
- **Do not** utilize composite decking products with integrated coloring or a faux wood grain.
- **Do not** install decking boards left-to-right or parallel to the front facade.



**Consider This:** When selecting a substitute material, consider the overall life-cycle and carbon footprint of the replacement product. Choose from materials containing recycled content or that feature an eco-friendly manufacturing process.

# FOUNDATION SKIRTING

Foundation skirting, due to its proximity to the ground, is often severely deteriorated and in need of repair or replacement. In some cases, the original foundation skirting may have been modified or removed completely. Stucco or cement board products are desirable due to their resistance to rot and decay. However, any replacement skirting material should be consistent with the original known conditions or the architectural style of the house.

*Certain practices and installation methods have proven to be **consistent** with the Historic Design Guidelines and are eligible for administrative approval:*

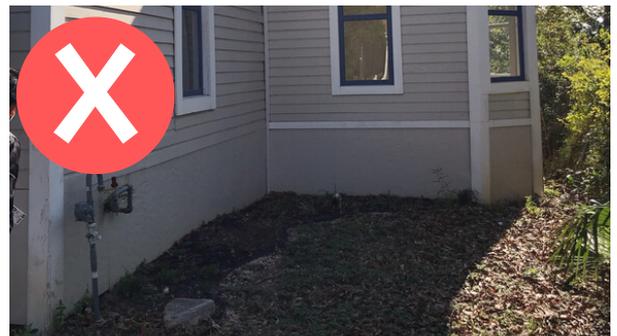
- **Do** install skirting with a profile that matches either the original skirting or areas of extant original siding.
- **Do** utilize cement board products at grade to prevent rot and decay. Selected material should feature a smooth texture and be painted to match.
- **Do** preserve or replicate original functional or decorative features such as drip edges and crawlspace vents.



*Pictured: Replacement wood skirting to match original siding with*

*Materials that are **inappropriate or inconsistent** with the architectural style or construction period are not recommended and may be subject to HDRC review with no guarantee of approval:*

- **Do not** install skirting in large sheets or panels, such as cement board or plywood.
- **Do not** install corrugated metal or tin skirting unless there is historical documentation.
- **Do not** fully replace original wood skirting with non-original materials such as stucco.



# WOOD SIDING

Historic wood siding serves an important function and contributes to the authenticity of your home. Milled from old-growth hardwood or longleaf pine, the fact that most original siding has lasted for more than 100 years is amazing! Routine maintenance such as caulking and painting arrests deterioration and ensures that siding will continue to last for generations.

As the primary component of your home's exterior, wood siding is susceptible to rot and decay over time. Lack of maintenance can accelerate deterioration, and many homeowners find themselves tempted to replace or encapsulate the original siding with new products.

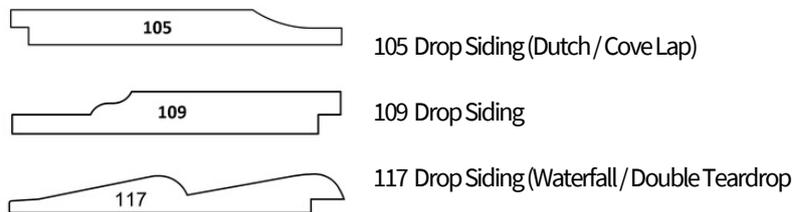


**Repair or Replace?** Repair refers to the "spot treatment" of your original siding. This might include introducing fillers to small areas of rot, cutting out and replacing small areas of siding with matching siding, and surface restoration through scraping, sanding, caulking, and painting. When more than 50% of an exterior wall plane is deteriorated beyond repair, then it's time to consider replacement siding.

Remember, wholesale replacement siding should not be considered until all measures to preserve the original siding in place have been taken. Preserving and patching original siding keeps durable, old-growth lumber on your house. This reduces the need to introduce new, non-sustainable materials which typically require more routine maintenance and future interventions.



## Common Historic Siding Profiles in San Antonio:



*Methods and materials that are inappropriate or inconsistent with the architectural style or construction period are not recommended:*

- **Do not** fully replace historic siding unless the original siding is missing or deteriorated beyond repair as determined by OHP staff.
- **Do not** install new siding that does not match the original siding's profile.
- **Do not** install composite or artificial siding as a replacement to wood siding.
- **Do not** conceal or encapsulate original siding with new materials.



*Repair and maintain original siding to the fullest extent possible. Wholesale replacement should be avoided.*

# WINDOWS & DOORS

Historic windows & doors are essential architectural elements which convey the character and craftsmanship of a historic property. The Historic Design Guidelines prioritize repair of original features over replacement.

*For additional information on **windows**, refer to the Historic Design Guidelines, [Windows: Repair, Replacement, and New Construction](#).*



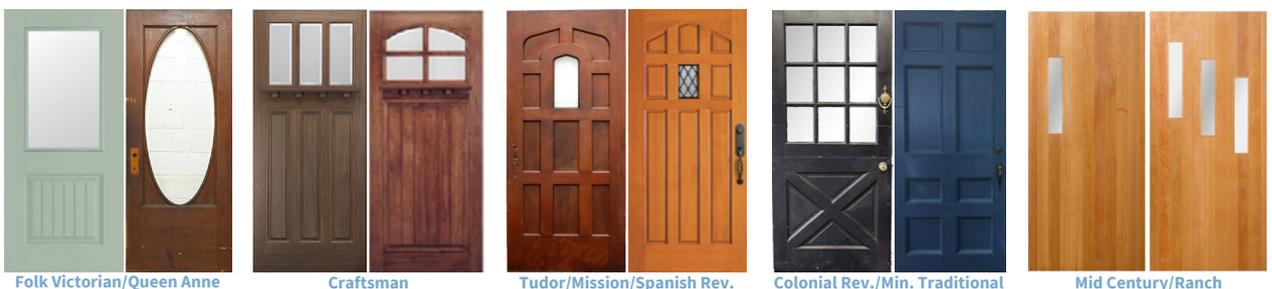
Once an original front entry door is removed, an important character-defining feature is lost forever. In most cases, solid wood entry doors can be repaired!

## Checklist for door repair:

- Replace missing or broken **hardware**
- Reinforce or reconstruct **joints** and connection points
- Replace broken **glass** and / or muntins
- **Fill** small areas of rot with and **replace** deteriorated wood elements or panels as needed
- **Weatherize** with stain, paint, and weatherstripping



Where original doors are missing or damaged beyond repair, replacement doors that are appropriate for the architectural style or construction period of the house should be installed. Period-appropriate doors are also available at most local architectural **salvage stores**. When replacement is warranted, architecturally appropriate doors are eligible for administrative approval:



Folk Victorian/Queen Anne

Craftsman

Tudor/Mission/Spanish Rev.

Colonial Rev./Min. Traditional

Mid Century/Ranch

# RESOURCES

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**Office of Historic Preservation Staff.** Consult with a historic preservation specialist to receive property-specific guidance on landscaping plans and the Historic Design Guidelines.

**[www.sapreservation.com](http://www.sapreservation.com) | (210) 207-0035 | [info@sapreservation.com](mailto:info@sapreservation.com)**

**The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stucco:** <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/preservedocs/preservation-briefs/22Preserve-Brief-Stucco.pdf>

**City of Ashland, Oregon, Historic District Development Standards, Historic Building Brief No. 3:** <http://www.ashland.or.us/files/HistoricBrief3.pdf>

**Old House Online, Repairing Stucco:** <https://www.oldhouseonline.com/articles/repairing-stucco>

**Old House Online, Horizontal Siding Guide:** <https://www.oldhouseonline.com/articles/horizontal-siding-guide>

**Old House Web, Whitewash: A Historic Cover-up:** <http://www.oldhouseweb.com/blog/whitewash-an-historic-cover-up/>

**US Heritage: Limewash:** <http://usheritage.com/limewash/>

**Stucco Scratch Coat Mix, A Simple Recipe:** <https://thestuccoguy.com/stucco-scratch-coat-mix/>

**Your neighborhood association.** Your registered neighborhood association can provide guidance on landscape characteristics, assistance in design and contractor referrals, and more. To find your association, visit **[www.sanantonio.gov/nhsd/neighborhoods](http://www.sanantonio.gov/nhsd/neighborhoods)** or inquire with Office of Historic Preservation staff if you live in a historic district.