

Historic Preservation Commission

Prince George's County, Maryland

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Historic Preservation Commission Policy #1-05:

The Use of Synthetic or Composition Siding, Fencing Materials and Windows

Aluminum and vinyl siding have been identified as the cause of some long-term problems that may result in the deterioration of historic building fabric.¹ These synthetic siding materials are considered detrimental to the historic and architectural character of a building (see the Historic Preservation Commission's *Historic and Architectural Significance: Evaluation Criteria, Policies and Guidelines*) Policy 1-87 states:

All synthetic siding may damage underlying material. Aluminum and vinyl are always detrimental in both appearance and in the potential to damage the original fabric... Vinyl siding imitating wood grain is most inappropriate, as grain is usually not visible on painted wood...²

There are a number of synthetic and composition exterior siding and fencing materials on the market today that have greatly expanded architectural options beyond aluminum and vinyl siding. These new exterior materials often combine both natural and synthetic materials and finishes and are produced through a range of technologies and with a variety of forms, colors and styles.³ These new materials are popular for new construction. Because the new synthetic and composition exterior siding materials have not been in use for a long period of time, it is the position of the Historic Preservation Commission that like aluminum and vinyl siding, these new materials may cause similar long-term problems to underlying historic building fabric. Therefore:

- (1) *Modern synthetic or composition exterior materials shall not be used to cover or to replace historic exterior sheathing or for repairs of features of a historic building such as gables, bays, dormers, and open or enclosed porches. This philosophy is part of the Historic Preservation Commission's adopted design guidelines, The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, and is specifically referenced in Standard 6.⁴ In the case of severe deterioration of exterior sheathing (beyond reasonable repair) the use*

¹ See *Preservation Brief 8: Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings--The Appropriateness of Substitute Materials for Resurfacing Historic Wood Frame Buildings*, by John H. Myers, revised by Gary L. Hume, National Park Service, 1984. This document is available online at www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/briefs/brief8.

² See *Historic and Architectural Significance: Evaluation Criteria, Policies and Guidelines. Policy #1-87, Evaluating Integrity, Degree of Alteration, and Scarcity and Frequency*. This document is available online at www/mncppc.org/county/hpc.htm

³ The use of one material to simulate the appearance of another, generally more expensive material, is not without historic precedent. For further guidance on when such practices are appropriate, consult: *Preservation Brief 16: The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors*, by Sharon C. Park, AIA, National Park Service, 1988. This document is available online at www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/briefs/brief16.

⁴ Standard 6 states: "Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical or pictorial evidence. The full text of the Standards is available at www2.cr.nps.gov/e-rehab.

- of in-kind sheathing material of traditional design, material and installation is always preferred for the historic components of a building or complex of buildings.*
- (2) *The use of modern synthetic or composition materials may on occasion be considered to be compatible with the architectural character of a Historic Site, Historic Resource, and buildings within a Historic District when its use is limited to additions and new construction. Modern synthetic or composition exterior materials, if compatible in appearance, form, dimension, and texture, may simulate historic building practices and may be considered appropriate, but only on a case-by-case basis. However, vinyl and aluminum siding will not be allowed.*
 - (3) *Replacement windows fabricated of vinyl, aluminum, or other synthetics are generally incompatible with the architectural character of historic buildings and diminish their historic character.*
 - (4) *The use of traditional fencing materials is always preferred within an Environmental Setting or for the enclosure of adjacent agricultural and equestrian spaces. Repairs to these existing or historic features should employ traditional and compatible materials and techniques. When fencing is newly installed, modern synthetic or composition fencing may simulate historic building materials and may be considered to be compatible with the architectural and historic character of a Historic Site, and Historic Resource or an Historic District when similar in color, texture, dimensions, height, and spacing. However, vinyl fencing will not be allowed.*
 - (5) *A Historic Area Work Permit (HAWP) is required for all work referenced in this policy with the exception of in-kind replacement of materials as directed by Subtitle 29-107(d) and further defined in HPC policy: Scope of Work—Ordinary Maintenance, August, 2000.*

Adopted: July 19, 2005