



## Residential Siding and Exterior Elements Guide

### Designated Landmarks and Historic/Landmark Districts

The Cleveland Landmarks Commission uses the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation when reviewing exterior changes to buildings or sites designated by the City of Cleveland as historically significant. This Guide was developed as a supplement to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation specific to siding and exterior changes in designated Cleveland Historic Districts and/or on designated Cleveland Landmarks.

*The exterior of a home should be kept secure, safe, and in good condition. It protects the home and any occupants inside and provides an aesthetic appearance that may match the neighborhood, fit in with a historic district, or stand out on its own. This Guide exists to promote the retention of historically appropriate elements on homes/residential buildings and provide detail on the Cleveland Landmarks Commission review process if changes are proposed.*

### I. Application/Review Process

*Siding replacement projects include review through the Landmarks Commission office and a permit issued through the Cleveland Department of Building and Housing.*

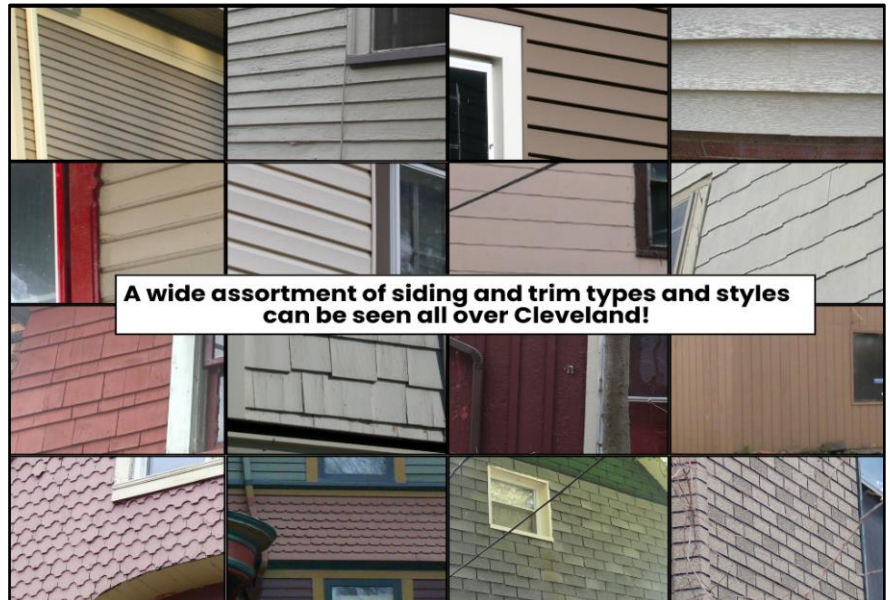
Every applicant, contractor, or homeowner should provide clear information to the Landmarks Commission office on the current condition of the home's siding and trim, any historic evidence of original siding (if available), and the proposed new siding is important for a streamlined review of the proposed work.

When applying to remove and reinstall siding, evidence or knowledge of the siding condition and appearance underneath the existing siding on the home is recommended to have available.

The additional details will help to inform the Landmarks Commission and document possible original siding on the home. Removal of siding does not require a permit to be pulled. It is strongly recommended to do initial exploratory work on an unobtrusive or protected part of the home to discover the condition of the original siding prior to replacement without damaging the home or leaving it open to the elements.

This document is focused on residential siding and trim on frame homes and buildings. Commercial siding repair or replacement projects should refer to the [Cleveland Storefront Renovation Program Design Manual: A Practical Guide to Exterior Commercial Rehabilitation](#).

Permits should be applied for with the Department of Building and Housing in advance of the installation of new siding to allow for time for the permit review through the City of Cleveland's permit application process. Work should not begin until a permit has been issued and is posted on site.

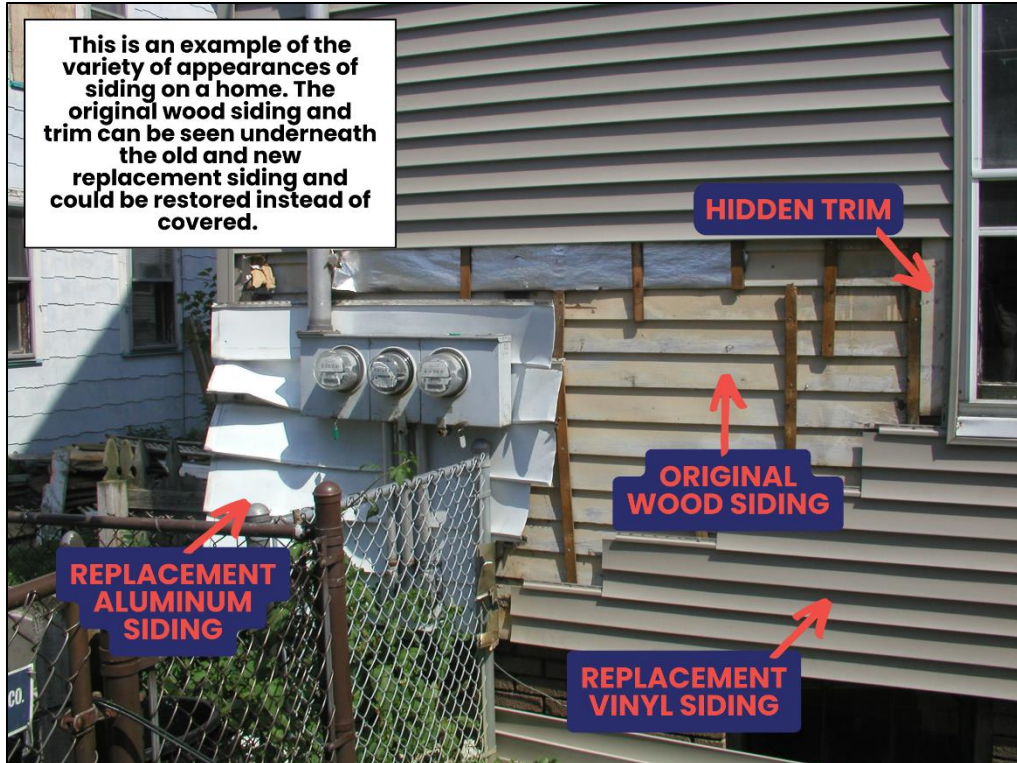




### Siding, Trim, and Exterior Elements At a Glance:

- The request to install new siding on a home that does not appear to meet one of the **Recommended Treatments outlined in Section V** provided in this document may not be able to be approved administratively and may require review through the Landmarks Commission design review process.
- Drop siding or Dutch lap siding is appropriate for specific styles of homes and should be retained if it is original to the home or chosen as a replacement option over traditional clapboard siding if evidence or documentation can be provided that the drop siding was originally on the home or is typical for that style of home.
- New vertical siding should not be introduced on a home that is not shown to be an architectural style that would have included that style of siding.
- Retain and preserve decorative and unique shingle siding in the original wood material as it is a character-defining element of any home.
- Appropriate trim or window casing should be retained or reintroduced whenever possible on every elevation regardless of the replacement siding material/
- Replacing or removing unique, decorative, or novelty siding or trim elements is not recommended and may require the Landmarks Commission design review process regardless of the location on the exterior of the home.
- Siding repair or replacement of missing exterior elements in the same style, reveal/profile, and preferably same or similar material is the preferred treatment for historic buildings, with a focus on primary and/or highly visible or highly visible facades. Replacement of siding or trim elements on non-primary elevations can have more flexibility as they are not generally considered defining architectural features.
- Durable and appropriate replacement siding include wood, fiber-cement and/or composite products currently available. Standard vinyl clapboard, shingle, vertical, or Dutch lap/drop siding options are not typically considered an appropriate replacement material for primary and/or highly visible or other highly visible facades of homes located in Cleveland's designated Historic Districts and on individually designated Cleveland Landmarks unless identified to be an appropriate alternative to the original or existing siding through photo-documentation.
- Gutters and downspouts should be replaced or repaired as needed and match the previously existing system in place. The installation of exterior gutters to a home that has internal or box gutters would not be recommended and may require the Landmarks Commission design review process.
- The addition or removal of non-siding exterior elements such as porches, awnings, shutters, etc. should be completed only after review with the Landmarks Commission staff and only with photo-documentation of what is currently existing and what may have been on the home previously. Removal of existing exterior elements or the addition of exterior elements not currently existing on a home may require the Landmarks Commission design review process.





#### What is Under There?

If the home has replacement siding overtop of the original sheathing or siding of the home, it may be protecting original features or hiding unseen dangers. It is very important to do careful exploration under replacement siding to see what lies beneath. In many cases, sneak peeks of the area underneath can be seen on corners, when trim is removed, or in areas where the material changes. Replacement siding is most commonly a vinyl, aluminum, or cementitious material. Asphalt panels or shingles in a faux-brick pattern was also used as a replacement material briefly in the 1930s-50s.

Unplanned costs can occur on a project if there is severe water or structural damage hidden behind aluminum, asphalt, or vinyl siding. If there is a place on a home where damage can be seen on trim or flashing but not on the siding itself, that can be a sign of interior damage. Damage or leaks must be repaired before new siding or trim is added to avoid further damage.

A positive surprise to find underneath replacement siding is the original siding of the home in good condition. That can be a sign of properly installed replacement siding and allows for the opportunity to see the original appearance of the home, identify any decorative elements lost over time, and restore the exterior to its original appearance. The restoration of original siding that was hidden for any number of years can be a large effort, but the overall appearance and longevity of a home can be improved with proper care and maintenance of original siding.

In some cases, the replacement siding is acting as a protectant/seal if the siding hidden underneath is a health hazard. Care must be taken when there is visible damage or flaking and if asbestos fibers are exposed. It is recommended to carefully explore the condition of the home before beginning any work to identify and mitigate any health hazards that may appear when working. Work should be completed with training or professionals that can safely abate asbestos and lead hazards.





## II. Home Siding and Trim

Siding is the exterior layer on the body of the home, generally the same style and design throughout a façade or can vary depending on the architectural style of a home and how it was designed. Exterior trim on a home can include the exterior border around windows and doors that direct water away from the window frame or door and protect the interior of a home. Trim in many cases includes fascia, frieze, corner boards, railings, or other exterior elements that have a molding or frame surround it. Trim is used as a finishing material to protect the home from the elements and complete the appearance of the home with added visual interest. Materials for siding and trim can include wood, aluminum, composite, cementitious, and vinyl options, with the non-wood materials generally having the option for faux wood grain or smooth textures.

**Siding:** Siding comes in a wide range of styles, types, materials, and even design. The most common style is clapboard (also called lap or plank siding). There are a few variations of clapboard/lap siding, but the overall exterior appearance is horizontal boards in uniform width across the façade. Intentional waves in the horizontal boards can be found in some styles of wood and cementitious siding, depending on the age and style of the home. An important detail for all clapboard siding is the reveal/width of the panels. A wider reveal may be appropriate for homes of a certain age, while a thinner reveal would be appropriate for specific styles of home. The variations that can occur in clapboard siding can be overwhelming, but it is best practice to repair original clapboard siding on a home rather than replace or replace clapboard siding in a matching style, material, and texture to the original siding.

Another commonly seen style of horizontal plank siding is Dutch lap or drop siding. The main difference in this siding and clapboard siding is the notch creating a flat appearance with the notch creating shadow lines and adding visual interest. This style is most often found in wood or vinyl siding options and is appropriate for specific styles of home.

A more decorative form of siding can be seen with wood, or wood-appearing shingle or shake siding. There are differences between wood shingle and wood shake siding from the creation to the overall appearance. Generally, shingle siding is fairly uniform in appearance while shake siding has variation in design and appearance. Shingle and shake siding options and vary in design and installation. Depending on the style of home, this decorative siding can cover an entire façade, the whole home, or be utilized as a secondary or accent siding. When used as a secondary or accent siding, it can be

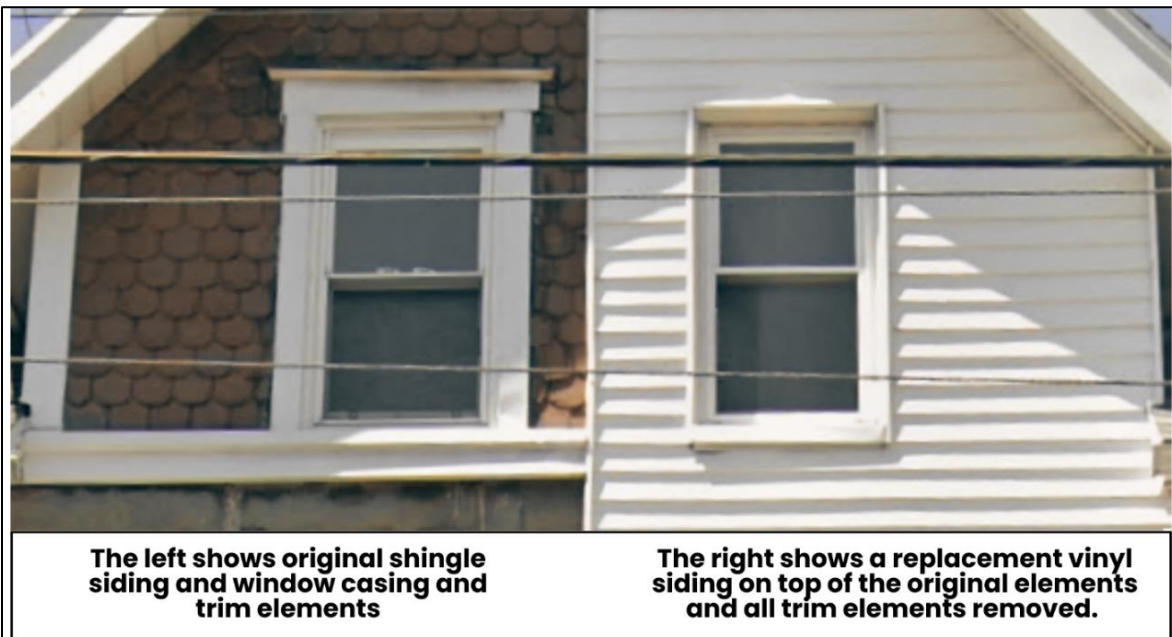




found in gables or dormers. Decorative scallop or patterned shingles were popular in many Victorian era homes and were a variety of shapes.

Frame homes may also have siding options that are not as common or appropriate in Cleveland's historic districts. Vertical siding (either panels or board and batten) is appropriate for specific architectural styles such as some Gothic Revival homes or more modern architecture. Vertical siding existing on a home should not be replicated if replaced unless shown to be an original or appropriate accent through documentation.

**Trim:** The size, design, and location of the trim should be informed by the architectural style of the home. Original trim should be retained as much as possible or replaced to match. As trim is a barrier protecting a home from water intrusion, it can become damaged quickly. Assessing the condition of the trim should be part of a complete home maintenance plan.



### **Window Trim: Functional and Appropriate**

Vinyl and aluminum siding installation projects of a certain age can be identified by a technique they used called “jump casing/J-channel” which removed the architectural details and depth found in trim around windows and doors. The process would remove or completely cover the trim and sill around a window and install the J-channel directly against the windows, usually leaving a thin band instead of a clear and defined window trim.

As architectural styles change, this installation technique has stuck around. In making the installation quick and easy, many times the window sills and casing are cut, damaged, or completely removed. The price paid for a quick installation can lead to a higher possibility for water damage, additional costs when restoring windows or siding, and a flattened appearance lacking any of the original depth found in historic homes.

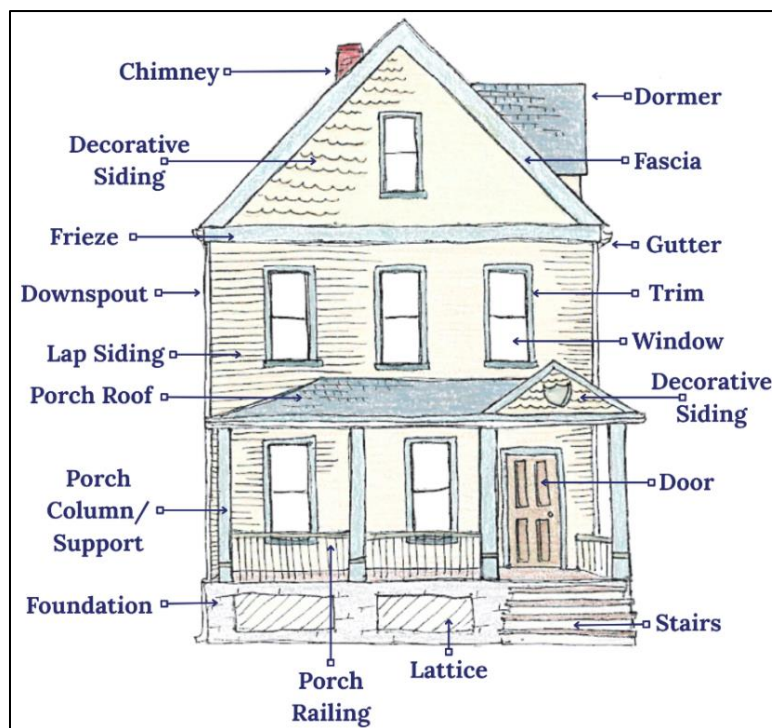




It is best practice to have all window casings and sills restored when either replacing windows or restoring or changing siding on a home. Window trim not only has a great aesthetic appearance and can be decorative, simple, or somewhere in-between, it also helps to protect window frames from water intrusion. Some contractors that replace windows and siding are providing a casing option to re-introduce wider window trim onto homes. Any new trim or casing should be properly installed and functional to provide protection and retain aesthetic appearance for historic or older homes. Siding should not cover over trim details; they both work together to create aesthetically pleasing exteriors.

### III. Exterior Cladding

While not “siding”, other exterior cladding can include brick, stucco, or stone. Depending on the construction of the home, the brick or stone could be structural or just a veneer. Helpful information on rehabilitation and care of exterior masonry can be found in the [Cleveland Storefront Renovation Program Design Manual: A Practical Guide to Exterior Commercial Rehabilitation](#). The recommended treatment for masonry on residential structures is to repair and retain. Adding stone, brick, or stucco to a façade that did not have those elements is not a recommended treatment. If there is existing cladding on a home other than siding, it should be maintained and flashed properly to avoid opportunities for water and pests to gain access to the home.



### IV. Other Exterior Elements on a Home

Looking at the architectural style of home and the neighborhood context for the existence and style of exterior elements is important in determining if they are appropriate to either have on the home or remove. Exterior elements include porches, doors, awnings, canopies, shutters, gutters, flashing, eaves, dormers, and more. For detail on appropriate treatment for exterior elements such as a Roof or Windows, refer to the [Roof Treatment Guidelines](#) or the [Residential Window Repair and Replacement Guide](#) documents adopted by the Cleveland Landmarks Commission.





Appropriate and consistent maintenance is crucial for the longevity and stability of any exterior element exposed to changing weather, pests, and potential damage. Water or ice damage can impact siding, trim, steps, railings, columns, porch flooring, shutters, awnings, gutters, and more. Visually checking the condition of the entire home in the spring and fall should be included in a yearly home repair maintenance plan. See **Section VI. Further Information** for more on home maintenance.

**Front Porches:** Porches, stoops, verandas, porticos, etc. are character-defining features of a home when they are present. Depending on the style and age of the home, a small front porch may be appropriate versus a full front porch. Some styles and ages of homes would not have been



constructed with a front porch at all. Knowing the style of the home as well as the style details of the porch is helpful when documenting or making any changes. The addition or change of a porch appearance should only be undertaken with documentation on the appropriate porch for the style and age of the home. Porch elements: include decorative railings, columns, and spindles that should be appropriate for the age and style of the home and not informed by modern style choices. Context is essential when evaluating porches as many streets or neighborhoods in Cleveland were developed in sections; similar styles of porch can be found on multiple houses in a small area.

**Awnings and Canopies:** Awnings and canopies can be significant character-defining features. Material, shape, and color all contribute to the style and operations. Awnings and canopies were popular in residential architecture throughout the decades as operable awnings or fixed frames and provided shade and cooling as well as visual interest. A new awning or canopy can be added if one does not and has not existed and, if the appropriate size, massing, shape, material, and color is used, it can add to the appearance of a home. The use of context and historic images is helpful in determining the appropriateness of existing or new awnings or canopies.

**Shutters:** Shutters were originally the only way to close an opening on a home and were essential for homes as protection and help with keeping homes warm or cool depending on the time of year. After the introduction of storm windows and screens, shutters went from functional to a more decorative choice for homes. Shutters should be correctly installed on homes where the age indicates the shutters would have been operable versus decorative. Shutter size should make sense for the windows on the home, and a properly sized shutter would fit and fill the window casing when closed. Mis-sized shutters can detract from the appearance of a home or create visual clutter. Due diligence in finding an appropriate style and size of shutter add to the appearance of a home. Not every home would be improved with the addition of shutters if they are not already present.



**Gutters and Downspouts:** Gutters and downspouts can be an important visual element on a home, or they are meant to fade into the siding and trim. They should be functional and preferably the same color as the fascia board that they are mounted to. Usually that means they are the same color as the trim, but that is not always the case. There are different types of gutters, and the appropriateness of the types depends on the style of the home and roof material. Internal gutter





systems or box gutters should be repaired or replaced with the same style to retain the appearance on the exterior of the home. Exterior gutter systems come in a wide range of sizes, materials, and colors and should be chosen with an appropriate material and size to successfully protect the home from water intrusion.

**Foundations:** Foundations vary in the material, size, and appearance but are key structural parts of a home. Foundations are typically concrete or stone and can be a full or daylight basement, crawlspace, concrete slab-on-grade, or concrete form. Many times, the foundation of a home is informed by the architectural style of the home, location, and ground the home is built on. Some foundations have openings for windows, window wells, or venting incorporated. There should not be vegetation growing through, in, or close to a foundation. Keeping plants about 2-3 feet away from a foundation is a good practice to avoid damage from roots, animals, and other damage.

**Decorative Accents:** Houses do not always fall into clearly defined styles and may have interesting exterior elements that make it stand out from all of the others. Decorative accents such as decorative moldings, balconies, vents, brackets, corbels, and more can be found on many homes. Some styles of home, specifically revival styles or homes in the Victorian era, are found to have a wider range of exterior elements that add to the exterior of character of a home. Decorative accents should be retained and repaired when possible. If an accent is not able to be retained, it should be documented and replicated or replaced with a similar element.



#### A Brief Spot of Color

The use of appropriate colors will enhance a home's overall appearance and curb-appeal. The architectural style of the home will help determine the appropriate locations of colors and even how many different colors to have on a home. Information about different architectural styles can be found in books and online. Modern trends and color schemes should be avoided.

When picking paint colors:

- The body of the home, or siding, should be the same color if it is the same material. If there are multiple types of siding on a home, repaint with different colors or tones/shades of the same color
- Trim can be located around doors and windows, between changes in siding, porches, railings, etc.
- Window trim is not the window frame and sash, and the window frame and sash can be a different color to the window trim, depending on the style and age of the home
- When in doubt: earth tones have been used consistently throughout history for homes in the U.S. The vibrancy and hues of the earth tones differ as materials for paint and general style changed over time, but they have never gone out of style completely
- If the siding and/or trim was stained instead of painted, then it should continue to be stained. There are a wide range of stains, solid or semi-transparent, that are available for exteriors today

Deciding on the best color for the exterior of a home can be a daunting task. There are many resources available throughout Cleveland and online to assist with picking the best color for the age and style of a home. Color consultations online or through local organizations/businesses can be helpful in finding the best color or learning about the appropriate places to put different colors on a home.





## V. Recommended Treatments for Common Siding Repair or Replacement Projects in Historic Districts: Case Studies

The following case studies provide an example of the options that may be available to an owner when they are looking at needing an update to the current siding on their home. They do not include every option available, only recommended treatments meeting the Cleveland Landmarks Commission standards and as recommended by the [Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation](#). Proposed work outside of the Recommended Treatments outlined below may require review through the Landmarks Commission Design Review process (see [Section I. Application/Review Process](#)).

*Before beginning work on the exterior of a home, note any health and safety concerns that may come from working with potential lead or asbestos remaining on the exterior of a home. Follow appropriate treatments or hire qualified professionals to assess the site.*

### Case Study 1: Original Wood Siding and Trim on the home

Recommended Treatments after identifying the condition of the siding and trim:

- Repair missing clapboards and trim as necessary throughout the entire home and repaint them to match, keeping the same siding profiles and sourcing appropriate decorative siding and trim, if applicable. Using proper safety treatment and process, restore the wood siding and trim by removing paint on home and repaint with additional care on areas that receive the most sun/water damage
- Restore the primary and/or highly visible façade(s) of the home with repair and repainting as needed and install a replacement siding on the non-primary elevations that have the same appearance as the restored façade(s)
- Replace the wood siding on the home with new wood siding that matches the same reveal, profile, and trim without replacing or covering original decorative/specialty siding. Install a replacement siding on the non-primary elevations that have the same appearance as the primary and/or highly visible façade(s)
- Replace the wood siding on the home with a composite or fiber-cement siding alternative that matches the same reveal and trim without replacing or covering decorative/specialty siding. Install a replacement siding on the non-primary elevations that have the same appearance as the primary and/or highly visible façade(s)

### Case Study 2: Aluminum Siding and no visible trim on the home

Recommended Treatments after identifying what type of siding and trim remains under the aluminum siding, if any:

- Remove the current aluminum siding and restore the siding and trim underneath (if the original was wood and is in fair or good condition) for the whole home
- Remove the current aluminum siding and restore the original siding on the primary and/or highly visible façade(s) of the home by repairing the original wood (if the original was wood) and repainting as needed. Install replacement siding and trim on the non-primary and/or highly visible façade(s) that has the same appearance as the restored façade(s)
- Remove the current aluminum siding and replace with new wood siding or smooth-face composite alternative in the same profile and depth as the existing aluminum siding or the original siding (with photo-documentation) with care taken to restore the trim in appropriate style for the home. Install the same replacement siding and trim on the non-primary and/or highly visible façade(s) or an alternate siding that has the same appearance.





- Repair the aluminum siding by replacing sheets as necessary and repainting

### **Case Study 3: Vinyl Siding and no visible trim on the home**

Recommended Treatments after identifying what type of siding and trim remains under the current vinyl siding, if any:

- Remove the current vinyl siding and restore the siding and trim underneath (if the original was wood and is in fair or good condition) for the whole home
- Remove the current vinyl siding and restore the original siding and trim on the primary and/or highly visible façade(s) of the home by repairing and repainting as needed. Install a replacement siding and trim on the non-primary and/or highly visible façade(s) that has the same appearance as the restored façade(s)
- Remove the current vinyl siding and replace with new wood siding or smooth-face composite alternative in the same profile and depth as the existing vinyl siding or the original siding (with photo-documentation) with care taken to restore the trim in appropriate style for the home. Install the same replacement siding and trim on the non-primary and/or highly visible façade(s) or an alternate siding that has the same appearance.
- Repair the vinyl siding by replacing panels only where necessary

### **Case Study 4: Vinyl, Aluminum, Cementitious, or Composite Siding and Trim**

Recommended Treatments after identifying what type of siding is under the vinyl, aluminum, fiber-cement, or composite siding, if any:

- Remove the current siding and restore the siding and trim underneath (if the original siding was wood and is in fair or good condition) on the primary and/or highly visible façade(s)
- Remove the current siding and install new wood or composite alternative in a historically appropriate siding and trim configuration. Install replacement siding and trim on the non-primary and/or highly visible façade(s) that has the same appearance as the restored façade(s)
- Remove the current siding and replace with new siding of the same material in the same profile and depth as the existing siding while retaining or installing appropriate trim
- Repair the existing siding by replacing panels/sections only where necessary

### **Case Study 5: Asbestos Cement Board Siding and Trim**

Recommended Treatments after identifying the condition of the asbestos cement board siding and what type of siding is under the asbestos cement board siding, if any:

- Retain the existing asbestos cement board siding and, using appropriate treatment and processes, carefully repair or replace damaged areas with a non-asbestos fiber cement alternative to match the appearance of the existing asbestos cement board siding
- Properly remove the current asbestos cement board siding and restore the siding and trim underneath (if the original siding was wood and is in fair or good condition)
- Properly remove the current asbestos cement board siding and restore the original siding and trim on the primary and/or highly visible façade(s) of the home with repair and repainting as needed. Install a replacement siding and trim on the non-primary and/or highly visible façade(s) that has the same appearance as the restored façade(s)
- Cover/seal the current asbestos cement board siding with new fiber-cement siding or composite alternative in a historically appropriate siding and trim configuration





### Case Study 6: Asphalt Siding

Recommended Treatments after identifying what type of siding is under the asphalt siding, if any:

- Remove the current asphalt siding and restore the siding and trim underneath (if the original siding was wood and is in fair or good condition)
- Remove the current asphalt siding and restore the original wood siding and trim on the primary and/or highly visible façade(s) of the home with repair and repainting as needed. Install replacement siding and trim on the non-primary and/or highly visible façade(s) that has the same appearance as the restored façade(s)
- Remove the current asphalt siding and replace with new wood, fiber-cement or composite alternative siding in a historically appropriate siding and trim configuration

### Case Study 7: Decorative/Specialty Siding and Trim

Recommended Treatments after identifying the condition and locations of the decorative siding throughout the home:

- Restore the decorative/specialty siding with care taken to ensure the design and profile is documented and replicated
- Cover/replace the original decorative/specialty siding and replace with new wood or composite alternative siding in the same or similar profile, pattern, and depth as the existing decorative/specialty siding (with photo-documentation)
- Vertical siding (panels or board and batten) as an accent should be repaired or replicated only if found to be an original accent on the home (with photo-documentation)

## VI. Further Information

Architectural style guides can be found online or through the Cleveland Public Library or Cuyahoga County Public Library.

Seasonal or Yearly Home Maintenance Checklists can be found online or through local home repair non-profit organizations.

*Assistance on appropriate maintenance and information on best practices for repair and replacement are available through a variety of sources.*

- [Cleveland Aging and Disability Resource Center \(ADRC\); City of Cleveland](#)
- [Cleveland Storefront Renovation Program Design Manual](#)
- [Heritage Home Program: Cleveland Restoration Society](#)
- [Lead Hazard Control; City of Cleveland](#)
- [Minimum Maintenance Requirements; Landmarks Commission Ordinance 161.09](#)
- [National Park Service Preservation Briefs](#)
  - o [Improving Energy Efficiency in Historic Buildings](#)
  - o [The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors](#)
  - o [Maintaining the Exterior of Small and Medium Size Historic Buildings](#)
  - o [Preserving Historic Wood Porches](#)
  - o [The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings: Repair, Replacement, and New Design](#)
  - o [Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings](#)
- [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#)
- [United States Environmental Protection Agency](#)

