

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### General Maintenance

Because porches form such a prominent part of the streetscape, original materials should be preserved to the extent possible. As most elements are wood, regular repainting is one of the most important ways to protect and maintain historic porches. Only a few porches in Gretna have cast-iron ornament or balustrades, but these too should be protected through regular cleaning, removal of surface rust, priming, and painting.

### Repair

Necessary porch repairs should be addressed in a timely manner, especially if deteriorated components pose a structural risk or a safety hazard (such as failing columns, loose railings, or missing floor boards). Any materials used for repair or replacement should match the dimensions, material, and profile of the originals.

### Replacement

When elements of a historic porch have deteriorated beyond repair, replacement in-kind with like materials is almost always the preferred approach. For example, a wood porch floor should be replaced with tongue-and-groove boards of the same width and thickness, not with concrete. Also, components to be replaced should be kept to a minimum. If, for example, a column capital has deteriorated beyond repair, it should be replaced with a custom fabricated piece matching the original. In such a case, it would not be necessary or advisable to replace the entire column.

When a porch that has already lost most of its original elements is to be replaced, and no documentation exists to substantiate a restoration, then a simple design approach would be considered most appropriate. Columns, beams, balustrades, and other components should be compatible with the building's style, well proportioned, and free of conjectural ornamentation. The drawing of a typical wood porch railing (facing page), with evenly spaced square balusters and simple top and bottom rails, provides a suitable example.

The same approach, emphasizing simplicity in design and materials, holds true when adding guardrails or handrails to existing porches in order to meet building code or insurance requirements. Simple wood railings are generally compatible with the historic housing stock found in Gretna. Metal railings, also frequently employed in these instances, tend to work best when minimally detailed and painted a dark color in order to visually recede.



An example of a new wood porch and stair railing that is well proportioned, simply detailed, and compatible with the existing historic building.



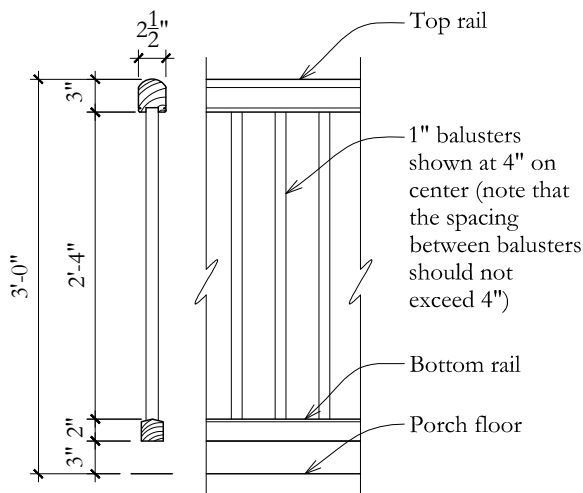
An example of a new simple metal porch and stair railing that is compatible with the existing historic building.



An example of a new compatible replacement stair.



This porch retains a majority of its original elements. Although they are in poor condition, none are beyond repair.



A typical porch railing

### HISTORIC MILLWORK

The decorative “gingerbread” exterior millwork on many of Gretna’s late-19th-century residences is a hallmark of the Queen Anne, Eastlake, and bracketed Italianate styles. Technical advances in woodworking technology, the proliferation of railroads, and the 1880s Louisiana lumber boom made wood ornament affordable for the first time, and as a result its popularity soared. Mail-order catalogs such as Sears, Roebuck & Co. offered everything from brackets to doors to entire houses. In its 1891 catalog, local millwork company Roberts & Co. (est. 1850) offered over 75 different bracket designs alone. In the New Orleans area, the majority of exterior millwork was made of cypress lumber, which was considered most suitable for the city’s subtropical climate because of its resistance to insects and rot. Today cypress millwork is highly coveted, for it is nowhere near as affordable or available as it was one hundred years ago.



Milled brackets support the porch roof of a shotgun.



Piercework panels, a spindle frieze, spandrel brackets, and turned columns characterize the porch of this Queen Anne/Eastlake style shotgun.



## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

### DO



Retain existing porches in their original configurations.



The two sets of steps are an important character-defining feature of historic double shotguns and cottages and should always be retained.



These wooden steps with concrete-block plinths are character-defining components of this Neoclassical Revival-style porch.

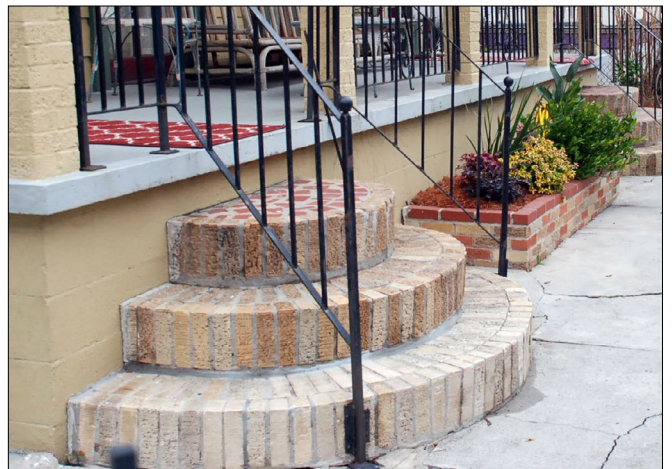
### DON'T



The original porch floor, balustrade, and steps have been inappropriately removed from this double shotgun.



The steps to the entrance on the right were inappropriately removed when this residence was converted from a double to a single.



The original steps have been inappropriately replaced with a modern brick version that does not match the building's style.



## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

## DO



This wooden balustrade is compatible with the ornate Eastlake style of the porch.



This simple wood balustrade is an appropriate option when it is necessary to replace a non-historic railing or add a new porch railing.



Particularly on porches that never had balustrades, metal guardrails and handrails are sometimes installed to meet building code or insurance requirements. Such railings should be kept simple in design.

## DON'T



Deck railings are generally considered to be inappropriate for historic buildings.



Metal pipe rails are considered to be inappropriate for historic buildings.



Metal railings with added scrollwork and ornamentation are generally considered to be inappropriate.



## WINDOWS AND DOORS

Windows and doors, along with their associated trim and shutters, are character-defining features of historic buildings. They communicate a building's particular type and style and can help to date the age of construction. Most were built with durable, high-quality hardwood and exhibit a high degree of craftsmanship. Functionally, windows are designed to provide daylight and ventilation. Doors provide security and access to a building, and when configured with glass panels can also be a significant source of daylight.

The historic buildings considered in these guidelines were all constructed prior to the proliferation of indoor air conditioning, and so doors, windows, and shutters were one of the key ways to moderate temperature and comfort. Windows were generously proportioned, often with full-height double-hung or slip-head units extending to the floor on the front elevation. Doors were commonly paired with operable transoms to facilitate cross ventilation. Tall windows and doors complemented the high ceilings typical of older buildings in the region; such height allowed warmer air to rise and escape during the summer months. Louvered shutters could be adjusted to either allow or block the sun's radiant heat, depending on the season and time of day, while still providing ventilation.

### GENERAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR WINDOWS AND DOORS

#### DO

- Original doors and windows (including trim and casing) should be maintained and repaired whenever possible, particularly on the front facade.
- If replacing a missing door or window, select a replacement that is appropriate to the type and style of the building. Remaining original doors and windows may provide important design clues and details that can be matched.
- Shutters should be sized appropriately for their openings so that when closed, they completely cover the door or window.
- Screens, when applied, should be simple in appearance and should complement the historic door or window (e.g., align rails and stiles when possible.)
- Security measures such as alarm systems, closed shutters, motion detectors, tempered glazing, and interior security bars are preferred over exterior security bars. However, if exterior security bars are installed on a historic building, try to minimize their appearance by using simple grilles without decorative detailing, and aligning the horizontal and vertical bars of the grille with the rails and stiles of the door or window.



Retain historic shutters.

#### DON'T

- Do not replace existing doors or windows with units that are inappropriate to the building's type or style. (See Part 3: Residential Types and Styles.)
- Do not replace existing doors and windows with units of a different height or width (e.g., in an existing 7-foot opening, do not install a 6-foot 8-inch door and cover the 4-inch gap with a plywood infill panel.)
- Do not fill an existing window or door opening with an inappropriately sized vent, window air conditioner, or other piece of equipment.
- Do not install windows in door openings, or doors in window openings.
- Do not remove existing original transoms.
- Do not add faux inoperable shutters to a facade or add shutters to buildings that would not originally have had them (e.g., most bungalows).
- Do not permanently install hurricane shutters. They should be stored and installed only when needed for storms. Also, roll-down hurricane shutters are generally not appropriate on historic buildings.



Do not install permanent metal storm shutters.

## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR WINDOWS

## DO



The size and proportion of these original full-length windows are typical of double shotguns.



The muntins and true divided lights of these original historic six-over-six wood windows create depth and detail.



Retain historic attic lights.

## DON'T



The original full-length double-hung windows on this front porch have been inappropriately replaced with smaller units and plywood infill.



The proportions and details of the original sashes and divided lights have not been maintained in these six-over-six vinyl replacement windows with interior (sandwiched) grilles.



Do not remove original attic lights. In this case, the original window was inappropriately replaced with a small vent and plywood infill.



## PARTS OF A WINDOW

**Casing:** the exposed trim molding around a window that may be flat or milled with a decorative profile.

**Frame:** the head, jamb, and sill assembly that forms a precise opening into which a window sash or door fits.

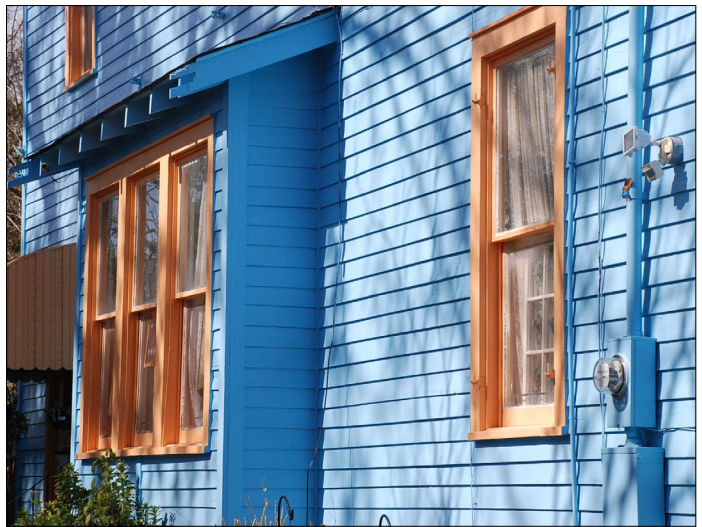
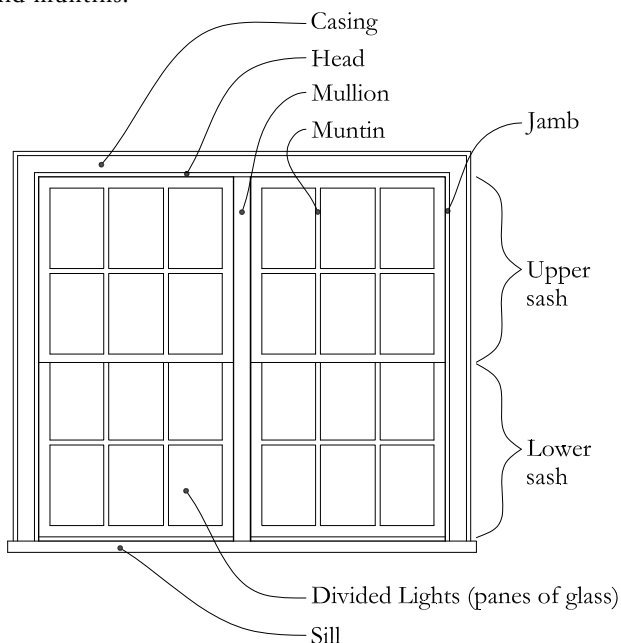
**Sash:** refers to the interlocking framework of rails, stiles, and muntins that hold the glazing of a window in place. Double-hung windows, for example, typically have two sashes (upper and lower) that can be vertically raised or lowered.

**Mullions:** the vertical elements separating two or more individual door or window frames.

**Muntins:** the narrow strips of molding that separate individual panes of glass in a multi-light sash.

**True Divided Lights:** the several individual panes of glass (or lights.) Found most often on older buildings, true divided lights were common when smaller panes of glass were more economical to produce than larger sheets. They are now increasingly rare and generally must be custom made.

**Simulated Divided Lights:** sheets of glass with applied molding that mimic the look of a true-divided-light window. Strips of molding that approximate muntins are applied to the front and back of a single large glazing unit (usually high-performance double insulated glass). In some instances a spacer bar might be set between the sandwiched glass panes to give the illusion of solid muntins.



These historic wood windows are in good repair.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND HISTORIC WOOD WINDOWS

Older wood windows are often criticized for not being as energy efficient as their modern counterparts. However, small measures can significantly increase their performance at a fraction of the cost of replacement. Because original windows contribute greatly to the character and integrity of a historic building, it is especially important that they be retained and made to work as well as possible. To improve performance and regulate heat gain/loss, consider the following options:

- Install weather stripping between moving parts
- Caulk perimeter joints (e.g., at frame and casing)
- Remove and replace missing or cracked glazing compound
- Insulate unused weight pockets, as this can be a significant source of air infiltration.
- Consider replacing the existing single-pane glazing with high-performance glazing if the muntin profiles allow it (i.e., if they are wide and deep enough).
- In some instances, interior storm windows may be appropriate. They form a secondary barrier, which can approximate the benefits of double glazing.
- Consider retrofit window films to minimize solar heat gain while maintaining visible light transmittance.
- Install interior curtains or blinds.
- Use functional exterior shutters to block or admit direct sunlight, depending on the need.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WINDOWS

### General Maintenance and Repair of Windows

Most historic residential buildings in Gretna originally had wood windows. Whether double-hung or casement, they generally were constructed with true divided lights with single (not insulated) glazing. These windows were designed so that individual components such as sash cords, glass panes, or sills could be easily repaired or replaced by a skilled craftsman. Even now, it is rarely necessary to replace an entire window just because one component is damaged. In contrast, most low-cost modern windows do not have this built-in flexibility and can be significantly more difficult to repair.

When historic windows are not maintained, they may become prone to draftiness, rattling, loose joints, or they may simply become stuck. These are manageable problems that can typically be addressed by a knowledgeable carpenter or handyman. To keep windows operating optimally, it is advised to:

- Regularly inspect sash cords, chains, and weights. Repair/replace any damaged or missing components.
- Replace broken glazing.
- Replace and repaint dry and cracked glazing putty.
- Repaint windows regularly.
- Treat early signs of wood deterioration before they become larger problems (which can take the form of splitting, cracks, insects, or rot). Consolidants and putty are commonly used to effectively treat damaged wood.

### Replacement of Windows

It is far preferable to retain original windows on an older building, as this preserves the historic fabric and integrity of the structure. However, when replacement is the only option, several factors must be considered including material, configuration options, quality, lifespan, cost, and energy efficiency.

The most common replacement windows today are generally made of vinyl or cellular PVC (a synthetic material that can be molded to look like wood.) Other materials used in new replacement windows include fiberglass, aluminum, composite, wood (albeit mostly from softer, less durable new growth timber such as pine), and metal-clad wood.

Because it is recommended that historic windows be replaced in-kind, typically only wood replacement windows would be considered appropriate. It might be possible to find a suitable historic wood window at a local architectural salvage store. Even if some repairs and repainting are required prior to installation, such a window will likely last far longer and cost less over time than a modern replacement.

Replacement windows should also match the overall size, proportions, divided light configurations, and muntin profiles of the original. Details matter immensely and can make the difference between a replacement window that fits seamlessly into a facade versus one that stands out as glaringly inappropriate. If a manufacturer's standard sizes and options do not allow for a proper match, it may be necessary to place a custom order.

In terms of quality and lifespan, historic wood windows made from durable hardwood often have an advantage. They were built to last, and with proper maintenance can have a lifespan well exceeding one hundred years. In contrast, materials such as cellular PVC and vinyl degrade in the presence of ultraviolet light (even with protective coatings that slow the process) and so their life spans are in the range of twenty to twenty-five years.

To increase energy efficiency, newer windows are most commonly made with insulated (or double) glazing. This involves a sealed air space, typically filled with an inert gas such as argon and sandwiched between two panes of glass. Combined with features such as "low-emissivity" coatings, these glazing units can significantly reduce ultraviolet light and heat transfer. Problems arise, however, when perimeter sealants fail, allowing condensation to form between the glass layers. When condensation occurs, the entire sash and sometimes the entire window must be replaced.

The full, long-term costs of replacement windows must be considered before deciding to permanently remove original windows. These costs include the labor to remove existing units, the cost of carpentry repairs to realign and plumb existing openings, the purchase price and delivery of new windows, installation labor, and any costs associated with more frequent replacement.



This double-hung wood window is in need of painting and sash/sill repairs.

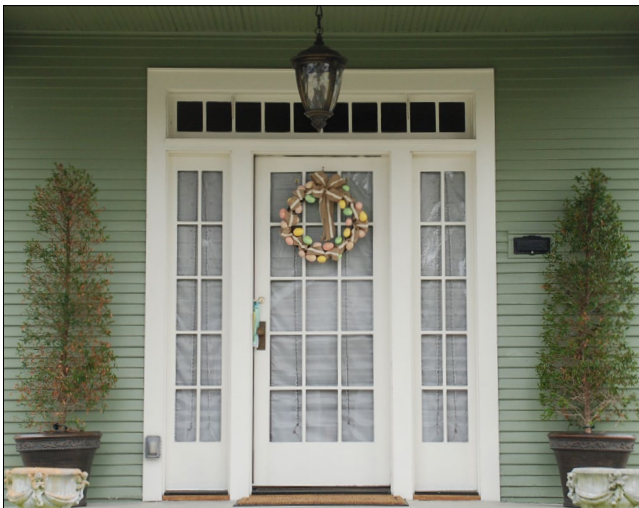


## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR DOORS

### DO



The trim above the doors and windows align (which is typical of shotgun facades), and the original transoms are still intact.



This entrance door, complete with sidelights and transom, is compatible with its Craftsman-style setting.



Historic louvered shutters are a traditional means of providing security at front entrances.

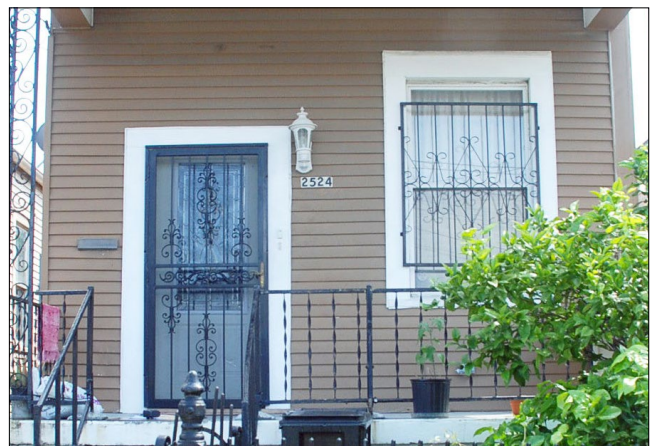
### DON'T



The original front doors were inappropriately replaced with new doors of a different height, and the transoms were removed.



Modern doors with contemporary leaded glass details, as well as modern screen doors, are generally inappropriate in historic contexts.



Modern metal security grills are discouraged in historic districts.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DOORS

### General Maintenance and Repair of Doors

Paneled wood doors, with or without glass lights, are the most common type found on historic buildings in Gretna. They are typically constructed of horizontal rails and vertical stiles that form a framework to support inset panels and glazing. Paneled doors can take on a number of different configurations and are sometimes combined with transoms and sidelights. Together with exterior casing, door assemblies are tremendously important in visually communicating a building's style.

Maintenance concerns common to wood doors include sagging and misalignment, loose hinges, slipping of inset panels, deterioration of wood members (splitting and rot), and peeling paint. These are typically simple issues that can be repaired by a knowledgeable carpenter or handyman. Regular maintenance, including periodic repainting, is the best way to avoid such problems.

### Replacement of Doors

When an original door has deteriorated beyond repair and replacement is warranted, the new door should match the old in material, type, style, size, configuration, and detail to the extent possible. Any new door should be appropriate to the building's overall style and period of construction. For example, a door that may be appropriate for a 1920s Craftsman bungalow would look out of place on an 1890s Eastlake shotgun. Newer off-the-shelf doors, which often incorporate half round or oval windows and modern leaded glass, are generally not considered historically appropriate.

Architectural salvage stores are potentially good sources for historic doors. Because of their quality and construction, older doors that are properly maintained will often outlast their modern counterparts. Any salvaged door selected for use should precisely match the physical characteristics of the door it is replacing.

It is important to note that on a historic home, the primary front entrance should be left intact even if the preferred access is via a side or rear door. The same is true when a double residence is converted to a single—both front doors should be retained. Removing these openings or replacing them with windows fundamentally changes the character of the historic streetscape.



This historic door can be easily repaired with a fresh coat of paint and replacement of the segmental-arch light.



This modern door is inappropriate for its Greek Revival door frame.



## WALLS

Exterior walls function as a building envelope, or skin, that provides protection from sun, rain, and wind. Through material, texture, color, and pattern, they convey information about a building's style and construction. This section focuses on exterior walls found on wood-frame structures, which are by far the most common construction type for residential buildings within Gretna's two historic districts. Materials commonly used for exterior wall cladding on wood-frame structures include wood siding, wood shingles, and stucco.

Wood siding can be found in a variety of sizes and configurations:

- **Weatherboard**, also called clapboard, beveled, or lap siding, is the most common type of siding found in Gretna. It consists of long thin boards that overlap one another horizontally when installed. Historically, weatherboards were milled with a square profile, but tapered boards became more common in the second half of the 19th century. While most weatherboards have an exposure (visible face) ranging from 4 to 5 inches, narrower weatherboards (2 to 3 inches) were sometimes used on the front facade, especially on Neoclassical Revival and Craftsman houses.
- **Drop siding**, also known as drop-lap siding, has a concave top and notched bottom that interlock when installed. This type of siding was generally only used on the front facade, and was especially popular with the bracketed Italianate, Queen Anne, and Eastlake styles.
- **Flush siding** involves flat boards nailed edge to edge to approximate the appearance of a flat wall. It is generally only found on the front facade of Greek Revival houses.

In Gretna, wood shingles are most commonly found in front gables, although there are a few examples of shingles used as wall cladding. Similar to weatherboards, they are installed in an overlapping pattern with staggered joints. Shingles can be cut and arranged in a variety of patterns that add visual interest to a facade. They are most strongly associated with the Queen Anne style (see page 38).

Stucco is a smooth or textured exterior finish that was initially used primarily as a protective coating over soft brick masonry foundations and walls. In the twentieth century, however, it became popular as an exterior finish for wood-frame buildings, especially those in the Craftsman and Eclectic Revival styles. When used in wood-frame construction, stucco is typically applied in a three-coat process over a supporting structure of wood or metal lath. Together, the bottom scratch coat, the middle brown coat, and the top finish coat form a stucco layer that is approximately 1 inch thick. Stucco was historically made of sand, lime, water, and sometimes added pigments or binders. Similar to changes in mortar composition, Portland cement was added in increasing concentrations after 1900.

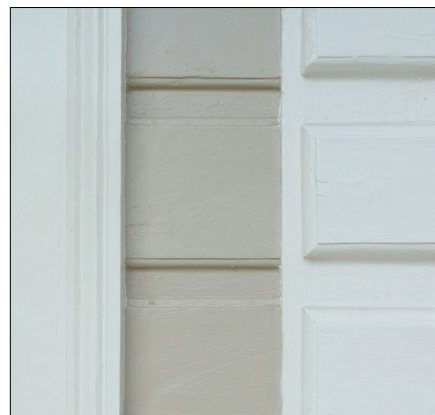
A few homes, particularly those in the Craftsman style, have brick accents most often in the form of extended piers and partial height walls on the front gallery. For information on how to best care for these brick and mortar components, please consult the Foundations and Masonry section of these guidelines (page 68).



Sawtooth shingles in a front gable



Narrow weatherboards on the front facade (left) meet common weatherboards on the side elevation (right).



Drop siding



## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

### DO

- Retain and preserve a building's original cladding (whether wood siding, shingles, or stucco). This is particularly important on the visually prominent front facade, which can be seen from the street.
- If replacing exterior wall cladding, select a material that matches the original in appearance, design, texture, and, when possible, material.



Wood shingles are defining elements of the Queen Anne style.



Smooth-faced HardiePlank siding (right) may be an acceptable alternative to wood weatherboards (left), especially on side and rear elevations.

### DON'T

- Do not apply vinyl or aluminum siding over existing wood siding. This can trap moisture within the walls and cause significant deterioration over time.
- Do not remove or conceal important architectural details when repairing or replacing exterior wall cladding.
- Do not add conjectural architectural features that did not originally exist on a building. For example, do not add a new stone veneer to the base of an existing stucco wall.



This vinyl siding swallows the wood trim around the window, concealing the casing's original profile.



Aluminum siding was applied over the original wood weatherboards. It should be removed and the weatherboards restored.

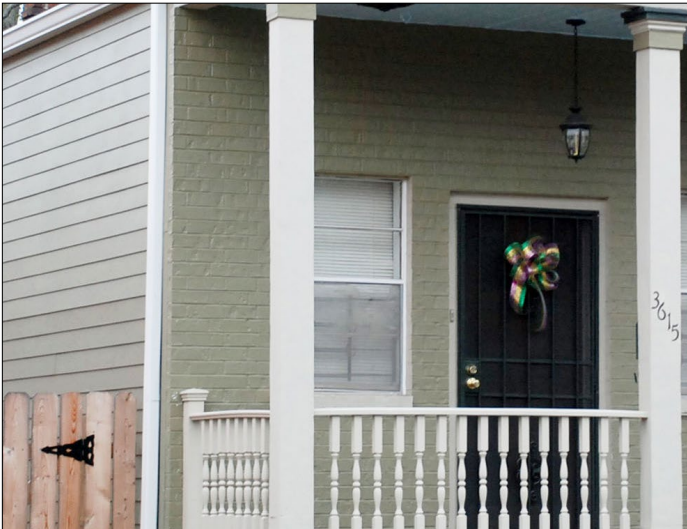


Asphalt shingles conceal the original wood siding beneath and should be removed if possible.





Remove vegetation from building walls.



Veneers such as vinyl and brick should be removed because they can trap moisture and deteriorate the underlying structure.



This shotgun's original siding is intact and well maintained.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Maintenance

Exterior walls should be inspected regularly for common issues such as peeling paint, termites, and rot. If left untreated, simple problems can lead to larger and more costly repairs down the road. Damage on the surface of walls can also be indicative of deterioration within the walls, including possible deterioration of structural members.

Many common problems are the result of unwanted exposure to water, and so the best way to keep exterior wood walls in good order is to reduce the potential for moisture intrusion. This generally means keeping exterior wood painted and well caulked, and making sure that openings such as doors and windows are properly sealed or flashed. It is important to identify and treat the source of any moisture problem, such as a leaking condensate drain that is keeping part of a wall perpetually damp.

Exterior wood walls should be cleaned with the gentlest means possible—a garden hose, mild detergent and soft natural bristle brush are usually sufficient. Avoid high pressure washes that can force water into small crevices, and avoid harsh chemical washes that can damage exterior surfaces. If sanding or removing existing paint in preparation for a new finish, take care to follow all precautions regarding lead paint removal.

### Repair

Small cracks and splits in wood siding or shingles can usually be treated by patching with a wood filler or epoxy. If damage is more substantial, try to selectively replace only those sections that have deteriorated beyond repair, and make sure that any new materials match the existing in material, dimensions, texture, color, and finish. It is rarely necessary to replace all of the siding on a house.

When repairing damaged stucco, patching is preferable to wholesale replacement. It is fairly easy to seal small hairline cracks with a thin slurry coat. Any repairs should be made in such a way that they blend seamlessly with the remaining stucco finish. While this can be tricky on unfinished stucco, painting can generally hide most patched areas.

With the mass production and availability of aluminum siding after World War II, along with asphalt veneers and asbestos shingles, it became somewhat common to cover existing siding with the newly available materials. Vinyl siding, which hit the market in force in the 1960s, continued this trend. Made from polyvinyl chloride (PVC), vinyl siding was touted as a low- or no-maintenance synthetic product that could provide a spiffy new appearance for an aging house. In reality, because PVC degrades in the presence of sunlight over time, much of the vinyl installed over



the last fifty years has been subject to fading, brittleness, and deterioration. Worse, the vinyl siding can trap moisture within the exterior walls, ultimately leading to further deterioration of the underlying wood. While new products are marketed as having improved coatings, durability, and permeability, which in theory allows wood walls to better “breathe,” it can still be a risky proposition to clad existing wood weatherboards with vinyl.

Another argument against encapsulation is aesthetic. Vinyl siding is often used to wrap and conceal important historic details and trim. When door and window casings are wrapped in vinyl, the result is typically a loss of depth, shadow, detail, and crispness. Porch beams, in particular, are often inappropriately covered. Sometimes ornamental woodwork is even removed in order to provide a flat surface to simplify the installation. These actions can all severely compromise the historic integrity of a building.

Because of these concerns, it is recommended that any additional layers of siding (asbestos, asphalt, aluminum, or vinyl) be removed if it is possible to do so without causing damage to the underlying original exterior wood. The original wood siding and any exterior trim should then be repaired and restored. It should be noted that asbestos siding should only be removed by a professional as it is considered to be a hazardous material.

### **Replacement**

If full replacement of an exterior wall is warranted, the preferred option is to replace the material in-kind (e.g., wood weatherboards with wood weatherboards, or stucco with stucco.) This is especially recommended on any primary facade visible from the street.

If replacement in-kind is not possible, then a material should be selected that duplicates the appearance and profile of the original sheathing. Smooth-faced fiber cement siding (such as Hardie-Plank) is an economical alternative to wood weatherboards for use on secondary elevations not visible from the street. Introduced in the mid-1980s, it is a solid yet lightweight material made primarily from wood pulp and Portland cement that has an appearance and workability similar to traditional wood. It is considered to be dimensionally stable and resistant to rot and termites.

Vinyl remains a popular choice for many homeowners and contractors, although its use is not encouraged in historic districts. Even when installed new, vinyl often appears flatter than wood and lacks the same exposures, shadow lines, and texture. Critically important historic details, such as the way wood siding abuts thick corner boards and door casings, are nearly impossible to

reproduce accurately in vinyl. A homeowner who does choose vinyl should opt for a professional installation that preserves as much of the original detailing of the building as possible. Also, the homeowner should consider selecting one of the newer product lines with increased permeability to allow existing wood walls to better “breathe.”

While vinyl may be the least expensive option up front, it may not be the best value when life cycle costs are considered. Vinyl has an average lifespan of approximately twenty to thirty years, and typically cannot be touched up with a coat of paint without voiding the manufacturer’s warranty. In contrast, the original wood siding on historic houses can last well over one hundred years with regular maintenance and periodic repainting.

## ROOFS

The roof has a fairly straightforward function: to shelter the interior space of a building. It must be structurally capable of spanning between the frame's structural supports, and its form should allow it to easily shed water. A roof can also be an important character-defining element of a historic building. Shape, pitch, material, and ornament all convey vital information about a building's type, style, and period of construction.

The most common roof shapes found on buildings in Gretna include front gable, side gable, hip, gable on hip, shed, and flat. Particular shapes are often associated with particular building types. For example, Creole cottages always have side gables, while shotgun houses, which always have ridge lines running perpendicular to the street, have either hip, gable on hip, or front gable roofs. The historic house types in Gretna all tend to have projecting roofs or overhangs on the front facade, which are often integrated into front porches or galleries. On bracketed shotguns, the roof overhang at the facade is an inherent part of the building's style. Parapets, which were especially common on commercial buildings and Greek Revival and Italianate residences, and dormers provide additional variation and detail to roof forms.

Roof pitch helps to communicate a building's style. For example, Craftsman shotguns tend to have a more horizontal expression, with lower roof pitches in the range of 6:12 (see the definition of *roof pitch* on the facing page.) Queen Anne and Eastlake shotgun houses are typically closer to 8:12, while Creole cottages may be 10:12. Tudor Revival houses, known for their steep roofs, can have pitches ranging from 12:12 to 20:12.

Traditionally, roofs were clad in wood shingles, slate, or terra-cotta (clay) tile, and each material lent a particular color, texture, and pattern to the roof surface. Lightweight metal (including corrugated iron and tin) was less common on houses, but was often used for sheds and other ancillary structures by the mid-19th century. Advances in technology made several new roofing materials available by the early twentieth century, including stamped metal shingles, asbestos-cement shingles, asphalt shingles, and rolled roofing for flat installations.

Today, the most common roofing material for residential applications is the asphalt shingle, sometimes also referred to as a "composition" shingle. These are typically made from a woven fiberglass mat that is coated in waterproof asphalt and topped with ceramic granules to provide a measure of UV protection. Fiberglass-based asphalt shingles have more or less replaced the heavier and more costly organic asphalt shingles, which used cellulose-based mats. Asphalt shingles today come in a wide variety of styles and thicknesses that can mimic the look of historic roofing materials. Other roofing products made from lightweight concrete, recycled rubber, and plastic are marketed as replacements for traditional wood, slate, and clay tile, although few can match the appearance and character of historic materials.

Lastly, roofs provide a canvas for ornament and detailing. It is common in Gretna and New Orleans to find terra-cotta tiles capping a roof ridge, ornamental terra-cotta finials, and decorative wood gable trim. Parapets, cornices, and brackets all serve to provide visual interest where the roofline meets the exterior wall. Even utilitarian components such as copper flashing and half-round gutters can contribute greatly to a building's historic appearance.



## DEFINITIONS

**Eave:** the overhanging lower edge of a roof. A rake is the inclined, usually projecting edge of a sloped roof.

**Fascia:** the horizontal trim board affixed to the ends of roof rafters.

**Vergeboard:** the trim board attached to the projecting end of a gable roof. Vergeboard may be plain or carved in a decorative pattern. In other parts of the country it is referred to as barge-board, but in Louisiana that term is reserved for the wooden planks salvaged from early river barges.

**Overhangs:** extensions of the roof system (joists, rafters, trusses) beyond the building's exterior walls. Overhangs protect the upper portion of exterior walls from rain and direct sun. Overhangs can be "open" with exposed rafters, or "closed" with a soffit.

**Soffits:** the enclosed underside of sloped- or flat-roof overhangs. In historic buildings, soffits are most often constructed of tongue-and-groove wood boards.

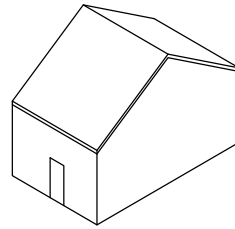
**Gutters:** channels placed at the eaves for carrying off rainwater. Early gutters were simply V-shaped wooden troughs. These were later succeeded by half-round gutters in a variety of materials, from lead and copper to galvanized iron, steel, and aluminum. Modern "K-style" gutters with their distinctive ogee shape became popular after World War II.

**Dormers:** small roofed projections on the sloping surface of a roof. Dormers are typically named for the types of roofs they themselves sport (e.g., gable dormers or shed dormers), although there are other variations such as eyebrow dormers. Dormers provide increased headroom in attics and permit the presence of a window or vent.

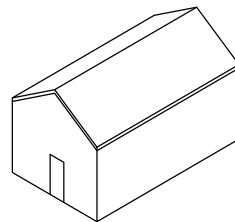
**Parapets:** low walls at the edge of a roof.

**Roof pitch:** the slope of the roof. It is often expressed in a ratio of rise to run (imagine the legs of a right triangle). For example, a 6:12 pitch translates into 6 inches of vertical rise for each 12 inches of horizontal run.

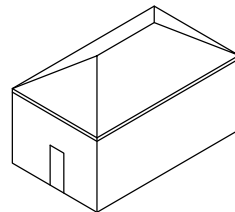
## ROOF TYPES



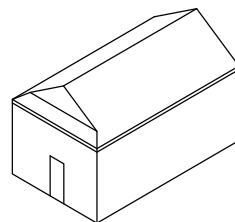
Side gable



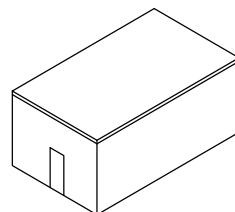
Front gable



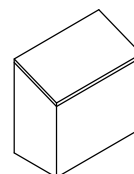
Hip



Gable on hip



Flat



Shed