

TO  
MAINTAIN  
AND  
RESTORE



*Your  
Old House*

Bel Air  
Historic  
Preservation  
Commission



Old Houses are truly treasures, especially in the many historic and “nearly historic” neighborhoods of Bel Air. We live in them because we enjoy their comforts from an earlier time. Many of us feel that old houses are better built than more contemporary homes. The proof is that they are still solid after decades of use and weather. What our older homes may lack in closet space, they more than make up for in style and in individual architectural features. A little maintenance, care and attention will help them to retain their charm and help you protect your investment, a smart move considering the record of property values in the Town. In addition, you may be eligible for tax credits for repairs and renovations to your home.

The following suggestions are offered to you, the owner of an old house, to guide you in preserving significant architectural features and restoring the original appearance of your home.

## In General

First and foremost, follow the Secretary of the Interiors’ standards which, simply summarized, state that you should repair damaged features with materials to retain the original appearance, design and detail; when unable to do that, get as close to it as possible. Any modern elements introduced should be appropriate for the house and should not spoil architectural features that give the building its character.

## Siding

Deteriorated siding material should be replaced with material used in original construction, or with materials that closely resemble the appearance of the original. Do not resurface buildings with new materials such as stone, brick veneer, vinyl or asbestos and asphalt shingles.

## Doors

Repair and use the original front door. Any original hardware on the door, whenever possible, should also be repaired and retained. Try to duplicate as closely as possible the size, proportion, shape and number of panels of the original front door.

## Windows

Windows are one of the most important character defining features of a historic home. It is recommended that existing windows be retained and repaired rather than replaced. A properly repaired, weather-stripped and maintained window sash, in combination with a good storm is an energy efficient as a replacement window.

If windows are beyond repair, new replacement windows should match the original in size, material and physical appearance. Glazing may be single or thermal pane. Muntins, the horizontal or vertical pieces dividing the panes of glazing within a sash, shall duplicate the original window pattern. They are sometimes referred to as grills or divided lights in newly manufactured windows. Muntins on new thermal pane sashes may be “simulated divided lights” rather than “true divided lights”. Between the glass grills and snap in grilles are not acceptable.

The installation of exterior storm windows is recommended to improve energy efficiency as well as protect the historic window from the elements. They also dramatically reduce the amount of maintenance to the existing windows. Storm windows should have a finish to match existing color of the historic window and frame.

The meeting rails of storm sashes should align with those of the existing window.

Energy efficiency of historic wood windows may further be improved by retrofitting the existing sashes with new weather-stripping that is specially designed for historic wood window upgrades that can be inconspicuously milled into the woodwork.

## Roofs

The original roof shape should be preserved. Use original roofing materials unless they are badly deteriorated. When partially re-roofing, replace deteriorated roof coverings with new materials that match the old in composition, size, shape and texture. If you are entirely re-roofing the house, new materials should not be used which differ to such an extent from the old in composition, size, shape, color or texture that the appearance is altered. There are many acceptable substitute/look alike products available for different roofing systems.

## Shutters

Shutters constructed of wood are preferable to other materials and must be replaced in kind. Any replacements should match the original configuration and location. Replacement shutters should appear to actually work.

## Porches

In repairing or restoring porches, use as much of the original porch material as possible. If it must be replaced, the porch should be rebuilt to its original configuration. The usual setback distance and overall width of the original porch should be maintained. Porch renovation should not alter the architectural elements of the house.

## Gutters and Downspouts

Replacement gutters and downspouts should duplicate the original in design and material.

## New Construction

In the case of infill additions and accessory structures, care should be taken to make sure that they are compatible with the neighborhood's setting in setback, massing, height, materials and details. Rooflines, fenestration and other exterior features should be consistent with existing original design.

Exterior air conditioner units should be placed in an unobtrusive location and properly screened.

Existing mature trees should be retained if possible and landscaping, plant materials and design should be suitable to the area.

## Tax Credits

You may be eligible to receive tax credits from the Town of Bel Air and the State of Maryland, if your house is a designated historic property and/or on the National Register of Historic Places. These credits are up to forty percent of the total cost of renovation. For more information on listing your house or to determine if your house is already listed, please call the Bel Air Planning Office at 410.879.9500 or 410.638.4540.

**Tax credits are not automatic; you must apply for them before you begin work on your home.** Many answers to your questions may also be found on the Town's website [www.belairmd.org](http://www.belairmd.org).

## Helpful Websites & Publications

- [www.marylandhistoricaltrust.net](http://www.marylandhistoricaltrust.net)  
Information for technical preservation assistance program
- [www.cr.nps.gov/nr](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr)  
National Register of Historic Places
- [www.historicpreservation.gov](http://www.historicpreservation.gov)  
Historic preservation information in thousands of websites
- [www.nationaltrust.org](http://www.nationaltrust.org)  
National Trust for Historic Preservation
- [www.renovatorsresource.com](http://www.renovatorsresource.com)  
Commercial site, renovation information and links to other sites
- [www.prattlibrary.org/locations/maryland/index.aspx?id=1130](http://www.prattlibrary.org/locations/maryland/index.aspx?id=1130) is a link to the Maryland Room at the State Library Resource Center and has printed historic or governmental information
- [www.oldhousejournal.com](http://www.oldhousejournal.com)  
Old House Journal, for historic homeowner, has discussion forum
- [www.historichomeworks.com](http://www.historichomeworks.com)
- **Town of Bel Air Design Guidelines for Rehabilitation, Maintenance and New Construction**
- **What Replacement Windows Can't Replace: The Real Cost of Removing Historic Windows** [www.apti.org/publications/Past-Bulletin-Articles/Sedovic-36-4.pdf](http://www.apti.org/publications/Past-Bulletin-Articles/Sedovic-36-4.pdf)
- **Strips and Storm Windows: Techniques for tuning up sash windows for winter** [www.oldhousejournal.com/strips\\_and\\_storms\\_windows/magazine/1099](http://www.oldhousejournal.com/strips_and_storms_windows/magazine/1099)
- **Restoring Window Sashes: Yes, they're worth fixing.....** [www.finehomebuilding.com/PDF/Free/021161084.pdf](http://www.finehomebuilding.com/PDF/Free/021161084.pdf)

## Phone Numbers

- **Bel Air Department of Planning  
Historic Preservation Services**  
410.638.4540
- **Maryland Historical Trust**  
410.514.7600