

EXTERIOR CLADDING & TRIM

Exterior cladding (shingles, clapboards, brick, vinyl etc.) is a building's "skin", and it works with other dominant features, such as windows, doors and porches, to define a building's character. The material's color, texture, shadow lines, application technique, as well as the molding and trim around windows, the treatment of details at the building's corners and along the roof edge, all contribute to a building's identity and historic integrity. The scale of the building and the rhythm of the façade are also greatly affected by the exterior surface treatment.

When a particular material, such as wood clapboards, has been used on the majority of houses in a neighborhood, a dominant pattern emerges in the community, which has a collective impact on neighborhood character. It is important to understand what the dominant building materials are and how they were applied.

Wood clapboards

With abundant timber and saw mills nearby on the Androscoggin River, wood was readily available and the preferred, as well as the affordable, building material in Brunswick. It was used for almost every construction element from framing to interior finishes. Wood clapboards are the predominant exterior building material found in the district.



Left: Simple corner board and wood clapboards.

Although asphalt shingles had covered these clapboards for many years, the wood was found to be in good condition when the shingles were removed.

Clapboards establish a strong horizontal pattern on the face of a building due to the shadow line cast by the clapboard's overlap.

Typically, clapboards align with the top and bottom edge of window and door openings. This detail was accomplished during installation by a subtle shifting of the width of the clapboard's exposed area.

Wood shingles of various configurations are also used in Brunswick, particularly on some of the late 19th and early 20th century buildings. A few brick structures also exist in the district. [Note: This section focuses on wood exterior finishes, since that is the dominant material. Masonry will be addressed in a different section of the *Guidelines*.]

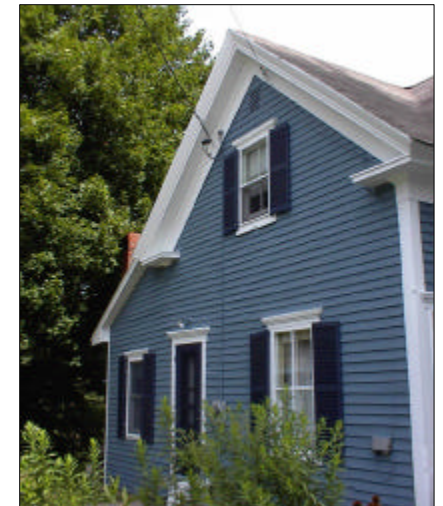
GUIDELINES FOR MAINTAINING EXISTING MATERIALS:

Whenever possible, the first and preferred choice is to preserve and maintain the original exterior cladding, such as clapboards, shingles, or masonry.

1. Historic exterior wall surface and trim should be maintained and preserved.
2. Every effort should be made to repair the original material and trim. The repair should be made with the same kind of materials that currently or historically exist on the building.
3. The exterior wall surface and any other related features should be photographically documented prior to any repair or rehabilitation work.

Right: Note how the clapboard edges, or coursing, align with the window and door lintels (trim at the top of the openings) as well as the window sills (bottom of the window trim).

This detail reinforces the horizontal emphasis of the exterior and unifies the building's appearance.





Left: Asphalt and/or asbestos shingles are often applied over original clapboards. These are not appropriate substitute materials because they do not simulate the original material.

Substitute Materials

Unless the original material (clapboards, shingles) is in serious disrepair, it should be left intact and then overlaid with a substitute material. The preservation of original material underneath the substitute cladding allows the alteration to be reversed in the future. If it is necessary to apply an exterior cladding that does not match one historically found on your building, the substitute material should be carefully considered.

First, identify the characteristics of the existing or historically appropriate material. Some questions to consider include:

- Does the material have a vertical or horizontal emphasis? (Clapboards versus board and batten)
- Are the primary façade (the front of the building) and the sides clad with the same material? It is not uncommon to find some buildings that use a higher quality material on the front with a simpler material on the sides.

- Is there a change in material between floors? Some late 19th and early 20th century houses use clapboards on the first floor with shingles on the upper floors or vice versa.

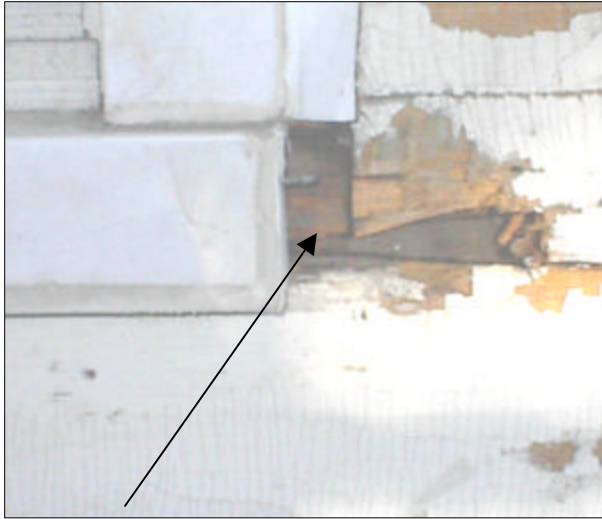
Use the identified characteristics to guide the selection and application of a substitute material. For instance, if a house has historically been clapboarded, it would not be appropriate to cover the building in a material that resembles shingles. Acceptable substitute materials might include vinyl or aluminum siding. Asphalt and asbestos shingles are not acceptable substitute siding materials.

Aluminum or vinyl siding is a common substitute material because of its low maintenance requirements. Aluminum siding became available in the early twentieth century. By the late 1950s, vinyl siding had become a popular substitute for aluminum. Both materials are still used today and have improved dramatically over the years.

Vinyl and aluminum may be acceptable substitute materials for two primary reasons: 1) Both materials evoke the horizontal emphasis of wood clapboards, which is the dominant building material in Brunswick; and 2) both materials can be installed over the original cladding, which allows for the future possibility of removal or reversal of the substitute material installation.

While the application of vinyl or aluminum siding over clapboards may not cause moisture problems, it does conceal any building problems that may exist or emerge. It is also important to recognize that vinyl or aluminum siding itself is not a weather barrier. The plane (building surface) behind the vinyl siding acts as the barrier. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the existing building is in good repair prior to covering with a substitute material, or current repair issues could develop into serious building problems. The installation of an alternate material is not an appropriate substitute for regular maintenance and/or necessary building repairs.

When a substitute material is applied over existing shingles or clapboards, the relationship between the decorative features (example: window trim) and the wall is altered. This relational change diminishes the prominence of the decorative elements, such as corner pilasters, and undermines the property's integrity. While this relational change is not ideal, it is preferable to losing all the character-defining details and original siding.



Above: The “ear” of end of the window sill was cut and removed to accommodate the installation of vinyl siding. Such a modification is not appropriate and diminishes the historic integrity of a building.

Below: This house has been covered with vinyl siding over all of the siding areas, yet all the important character-defining trim features have been preserved and maintained.

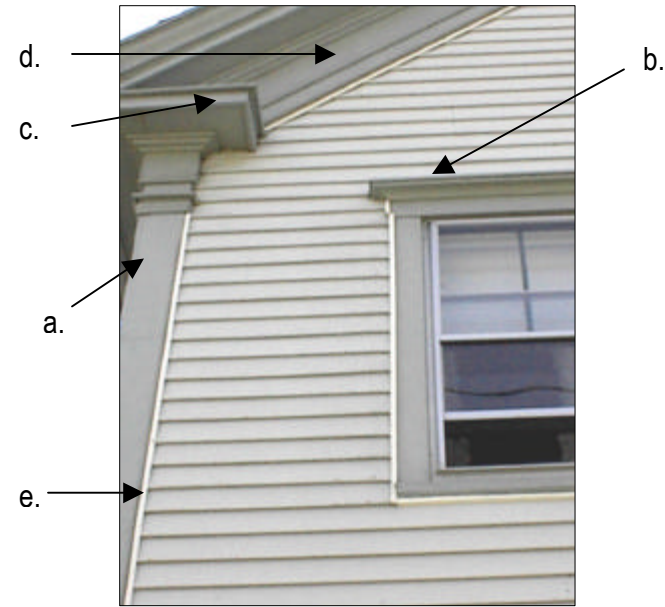


Above: The images above illustrate how the improper installation of a substitute material diminishes the historic character of a house.

In the left image, the corner pilaster is clearly visible whereas in the right image, the pilaster, an important character-defining feature, has been covered over with the substitute siding material.

GUIDELINES FOR SUBSTITUTE SIDING (VINYL OR ALUMINUM):

1. Character-defining historic features such as eave brackets, cornice and cornice detailing (fascia, soffit), corner pilasters, and windows and doors must never be removed or obscured by a substitute siding.
2. Original siding and/or shingles in good repair should be maintained and preserved.
3. Substitute siding should duplicate the exposed area, or height, as well as the length of the original wood clapboard.
4. Vinyl with embossed wood graining, intended to simulate wood, is not an acceptable option, as the exaggerated wood grain is typically not found on wood siding.
5. The visibility of vinyl panel overlaps should be minimized by avoiding stair-step installation patterns and by facing the overlaps away from the most prominent or visible viewpoint.
6. The use of J-channel should be minimized around window and door openings. The J-channel color must match the siding color.
7. The coursing of the vinyl should align with the top of the window and door trim. If necessary, favor aligning the coursing with the tops of windows.
8. Original or historic siding material should not be removed prior to the installation of a substitute material, because the removal of original material is not a reversible alteration.
9. Substitute materials should not be attached over exterior brick or stone.



Above: Although preserving or restoring original cladding is preferable, this vinyl installation is an acceptable compromise. The important character-defining features have been retained, preserved, and remain uncovered, including:

- a. Corner pilaster
- b. Window lintel and surround
- c. Cornice return
- d. Raking cornice

The color difference between the details and the wall color is appropriate. However, the mismatch in color between the siding and the J-channel (e) is not appropriate.