



# • DESIGN • REVIEW • GUIDE •

## Replacement Siding

Burlington is well known as a community with a high quality of life, small and cohesive neighborhoods, a vibrant downtown and waterfront – all within a spectacular setting on the shores of Lake Champlain. This deserving reputation is due in part to the City's small size, entrepreneurial spirit, civic-minded citizens and activist government. One of the many factors that makes Burlington such a great place to live, work and visit is the community's attention to detail, and respect for its setting, heritage and quality urban design.

Burlington's Design Review process strives to protect the city's unique qualities and strong sense of place by carrying out citywide development and design objectives. The purpose of this *Design Review Guide* is to help applicants in preparing projects to be reviewed by the Design Review Board and the Burlington Planning Commission. Through materials such as this, the Department of Planning & Zoning seeks to make information available well before the final design of a project saving the applicant, and the city, time and money.

### DESIGN ISSUES

Several issues arise when one considers replacing the siding on older and historic buildings.

#### **HELP ME, I Can't Breathe!**

Buildings are designed to "breathe" allowing for air exchange with the outdoors. This provides better circulation and an exhaust for stale indoor air, and prevents the build-up of moisture - particularly in the roof and exterior walls.

Newer buildings use a variety of strategies to allow for building ventilation such as ridge, wall or soffit vents. Older buildings typically do not have these types of venting systems. The application of vinyl or aluminum siding can dramatically affect the ability of an older building to ventilate, creating a build-up of moisture and possibility severe damage.

#### **Treat the Disease, not just a Symptom.**

Continually peeling paint is often one reason why replacement siding is considered. **Stop!** Peeling paint may be a symptom of a larger problem. Moisture – often caused by ice damming, a leaking roof, or the recent addition of blown-in wall insulation, is often the culprit. An older house not only needs to breathe, but must also be maintained.

First understand why the paint is peeling before 'covering' the wall with new siding. Covering the problem may only hide it from view. The problem's still there, and the moisture encapsulated by the siding is probably making it worse.

#### **There is No Free Lunch.**

Many times property owners consider the use of replacement siding to save on maintenance costs. While this may be true in the short run, replacement siding will cost much more than a good paint job. It too requires periodic maintenance, and repairs from fading, cracking or denting can be much more difficult and costly than for wood.



Dented siding

#### **Energy Efficiency.**

Sometimes vinyl siding is considered as an energy efficiency solution for an older home. Admittedly, we all want lower energy bills! Surprisingly however, vinyl siding has not been proven to provide any significant energy saving benefit. Typically the ½" or less of rigid insulation under the siding is too thin for much insulation value. Finally, vinyl siding by nature cannot be airtight – it must be able to expand or contract with extreme temperatures and is designed with weep holes. This draft tends to counteract any insulation or barrier value to you and your home.

There are often much cheaper, easier and less time-consuming energy solutions, with a faster and greater return on the investment. Most energy loss occurs through roofs, windows and doors. Call a professional for suggestions. Often they'll provide a free consultation.

#### **Building Character.**

Each piece of a puzzle has a purpose and that's true for buildings too. The purpose in architecture is often to create a visual effect. Historically, the trim around windows, doors, at the eave, and even the size of the clapboard (the "reveal")

were all carefully considered during the building's design. Destroying or covering up even one or two of these elements often destroys that visual balance, thus compromising the architectural integrity of the building.



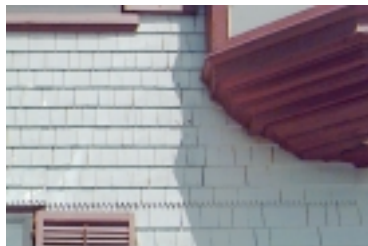
Historic residence



Window details and shadows

Replacing original siding often results in the removal or covering of distinctive trim and other architectural details and may alter the relief of projecting window and door openings. This creates odd shadow lines, and makes the trim appear smaller and recessed into the rest of the building. Finally, if the reveal of the new siding is not similar to the old, the entire building may lose its texture and original appearance.

Replacement siding is designed in groups of clapboards – often 2 or 3 rows at a time - to allow quick and easy installation. However, this can prove less adaptable than wood and make it more difficult to respect certain architectural details.



Window detailing

## TREATMENT OBJECTIVES

If substitute siding material is your final choice, proper installation is critical. Not only will it look better, it will last longer and be more cost effective.

### Consider the following:

- 1. Know your options.** There are many products and applicators to choose from. Taking advantage of “special offers” may save money in the short run, but can lead to larger problems and expenses later.
- 2. Match the reveal of the existing siding.** Or go with a slightly smaller size. Historically clapboard had a smaller reveal than is typical today.
- 3. Retain the trim details in their entirety and do not cover them up.** This may mean taking off the existing siding first to prevent the new siding from protruding beyond the trim.

**4. Use a brushstroke or smooth siding.** Wood grain textured siding collects dirt and grime, is difficult to clean, and is often too repetitive to look like real wood.

**5. Have as few breaks as possible with lengths long enough to span between trim elements.** Do this to reduce sagging, noticeable seams and separation points.

**6. Use a heavy gauge siding.** It's less temperature sensitive, and will reduce the chances of it separating and sagging. The color will be more fade resistant if it is dyed rather than just a surface color.

**7. Keep extra around for future repair jobs.** Synthetic siding isn't maintenance free. (Vinyl and aluminum can crack, fade, dent and even melt in very high temperatures.) Also factory colors and finishes change over time and may be very difficult to match later.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

*city permits & general information*

- **Burlington Dept. of Planning & Zoning**  
135 Church St., Burlington, VT 05401  
802.865.7188

*city rehabilitation, painting and financing programs*

- **Community & Economic Development Office**  
Burlington City Hall, Burlington, VT 05401  
802.865.7144

*energy audits and city energy efficiency programs*

- **Burlington Electric Department**  
585 Pine St., Burlington, VT 05401  
802.658.0300

*rehabilitating historic buildings and tax credits*

- **Vermont Division for Historic Preservation**  
National Life Bldg., Drawer 20  
Montpelier, VT 05620-0501  
802.828.3211

This information has been prepared with the assistance of a matching grant from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation through the National Park Service, US Department of the Interior under the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior.

Regulations of the US Department of the Interior prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, or handicap in its federally assisted programs. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program activity or facility operated by a recipient of federal assistance, should write to: Director, Equal Opportunity Program, US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington DC. 20013-7127.