



CITY OF

Ypsilanti

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Historic District Fact Sheet

Alternative Materials

This Fact Sheet is not a substitute for the ordinance, but addresses common questions about City ordinances. For further information, please contact the Preservation Planner.

All permit applications are available from the Building Department and at cityofypsilanti.com/permits.

Completed applications may be dropped off at the Building Department.

City Hall

One South Huron
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Building

3rd Floor, City Hall
Phone: (734) 482-1025
cityofypsilanti.com/157

Planning

3rd Floor, City Hall
Phone: (734) 483-9646
cityofypsilanti.com/planning

Historic District

3rd Floor, City Hall
Phone: (734) 483-9646
cityofypsilanti.com/hd

All permits, fees, and factsheets can be found at cityofypsilanti.com/permits.

There are a variety of home improvement products on the market today that claim to have a better quality, longevity, and affordability to traditional building materials. Not all of these products are appropriate for historic resources. Historic preservation strives for authenticity and prioritizes repair over replacement. When replacement is necessary, it should be in-kind. The HDC recognizes that an in-kind replacement is not always feasible and has produced this fact sheet as a guide for selecting appropriate alternative materials.

PLEASE CONTACT THE PRESERVATION PLANNER FOR GUIDANCE.

HDC Considerations for Permitting Alternative Materials

1. Is the item proposed for replacement a historic feature of the building?
2. Does the item being addressed actually need a full replacement, or can it be repaired?
3. Are the historic building materials still available? Wood siding, for instance is still produced, while historic stone may be a greater challenge.
4. Has the historic material failed due to causes out of the applicant's control- such as environmental factors?
5. Does repeated repair and replacement of historic materials pose a threat to the structure as a whole?
6. Does Building Code prohibit the historic material?
7. Will retaining historic materials cause undue financial burden to the applicant? *Ask staff for Financial Hardship Requirements.*

HDC Considerations for Types of Alternative Materials

1. Is the alternative material compatible with the original material in such areas as size, texture, and finish?
2. How does the material interact with the other materials on the building? Consider expansion/contraction rates and moisture permeability.
3. Is this material repairable and easily sourced- or will it pose another challenge when it needs replacement?
4. The City of Ypsilanti has committed to sustainability. Is it possible to recycle or reuse this product when it has ceased to function? Most historic materials are natural and can biodegrade or be recycled.

General Comments on Alternative Materials

- Vinyl has proven inappropriate for historic resources and therefore vinyl siding and vinyl/vinyl-clad windows will not be approved.
- Fiber-cement siding (such as HardiePlank) has been approved on a case-by-case basis, primarily for new construction and selective repairs.
- Composite (mixture of wood and fibrous materials) windows have been approved on a case-by-case basis. Please see the Windows Fact Sheet.
- Composite decking has been approved on a case-by-case basis.
- All composite materials should have a smooth or textured finish. Faux-wood grain is not appropriate.
- Applicants presenting new alternative materials should bring samples and product information to the HDC meeting.