



CITY OF

# Ypsilanti

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## Historic District Fact Sheet

### Windows

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](http://cityofypsilanti.com/permits).

Completed applications may be dropped off at the Building Department.

### City Hall

One South Huron  
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

### Building

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, City Hall  
Phone: (734) 482-1025  
[cityofypsilanti.com/157](http://cityofypsilanti.com/157)

### Planning

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, City Hall  
Phone: (734) 483-9646  
[cityofypsilanti.com/planning](http://cityofypsilanti.com/planning)

### Historic District

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, City Hall  
Phone: (734) 483-9646  
[cityofypsilanti.com/hd](http://cityofypsilanti.com/hd)

All permits, fees, and factsheets can be found at [cityofypsilanti.com/permits](http://cityofypsilanti.com/permits).

### The Importance of Historic Windows

Windows are the “eyes” of a building. Even the simplest of windows can be considered character-defining elements of a building. Historic windows are often unique in their size, dimension, and design; and therefore are not easily replicated. Additionally, historic windows are made from components that can be individually replaced; while if a component breaks on a replacement window, generally the whole unit must be replaced again. Preserving historic windows makes sense economically and environmentally. The Historic District Commission encourages rehabilitation or repair of historic windows and reviews replica or replacement windows on a case-by-case basis. This fact sheet provides guidance for common window questions.

*CONTACT THE PRESERVATION PLANNER BEFORE YOUR WINDOW PROJECT.*

### Rehabilitation and Re-glazing Historic Windows

Window rehabilitation often results in considerable energy cost savings while at the same time preserving original architectural materials. Epoxy wood-consolidating materials and polyurethane glues make it possible to repair even badly deteriorated wood windows.

#### Repair Process

- Remove the sash and lay it on a flat surface.
- Examine the exterior window frame, especially the sill, for rot or other deterioration.
- Dig out and replace bad sections with new wood or epoxy repair material. The epoxy works like auto body filler or spackle. Mix it up and pack it tightly into any depression or hollow in the wood. When hardened, it can be sanded, primed and painted.
- Then remove paint or varnish on both interior and exterior of the sash, re-glue where necessary, replace cracked glass and loose or missing glazing putty.
- Sand, apply a coat of linseed oil, prime with oil-based primer, and paint the sash with latex paint.
- Replace sash cord if windows are counterweighted.
- Return sash to window.
- Nail stops back into place.

For more information on wood window rehabilitation, see NPS Preservation Brief 9: The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows, available at <http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/9-wooden-windows.htm>.

Be aware of the dangers of lead in window repair, and take the necessary precautions. See [https://www.mhpn.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/MHPN\\_-\\_Lead\\_Resource\\_Guide\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.mhpn.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/MHPN_-_Lead_Resource_Guide_FINAL.pdf) for more information.

### Energy Efficiency and Historic Windows

In most cases, home energy loss from window openings is 10-15% of the total loss. The often promised savings of modern replacement windows seldom outweigh the cost of installation. Before undertaking the expense of window replacement, check first that the attic is well insulated. Often, air loss through windows can be mitigated by simple nonintrusive measures, such as interior or exterior storm windows; curtains; or reglazing.

## **Screen Windows and Storm Windows**

Any new screen or storm must be compatible with the window it is covering.

Metal combination screen/storms are permitted, although wood screens and storms are encouraged for better appearance and more efficient energy conservation. If a metal-framed screen/storm is installed, it must fit within the exterior trim. The metal frame must be either painted or factory-finished, not mill (raw metal) finish. Re-caulking and weather stripping are required and will improve the thermal efficiency.

## **Shutters**

Wood shutters are permitted as a way to close off an unnecessary window. They must be hinged, fit within the window frame and painted. Non-functioning shutters may be permitted on a case-by-case basis, if they are considered appropriate for the structure and must match the opening size of the window.

## **Creating New Windows or Doors**

New openings transform a building's character, often threatening historic integrity, and are not generally allowed. New openings are considered on a case-by-case basis.

## **Requirements for a Window Replacement Application**

In some cases, replacement windows are approved by the Historic District Commission. *In order for the commission to approve replacement windows, the applicant must provide detailed information and meet certain conditions.*

1. If the existing windows are historic to the building, i.e. over 50 years old, every effort should be made to preserve them. If the applicant is citing poor condition as a reason for replacement, then they must provide documentation to that extent. At minimum, this should include detailed photos of each window proposed for replacement. Close-up shots showing the damage should be provided.
2. Large projects, particularly for commercial rehabilitation, may require a third party condition assessment of windows.
  - a. This assessment should be made by an unbiased professional, such a tradesperson, or historic architect, who will provide a report on the condition and reparability of windows.
  - b. The assessment cannot be made by a replacement window company or contractor.
3. If the applicant claims keeping historic windows will cause undue financial hardship, a cost comparison of replacement windows vs. repairing the originals by qualified tradespersons must be submitted as well.

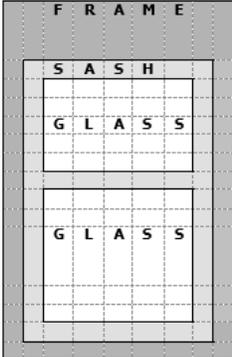
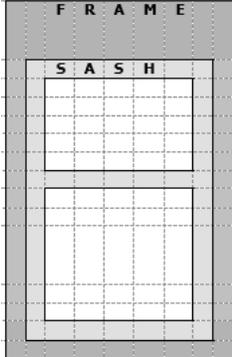
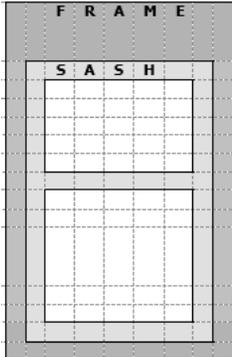
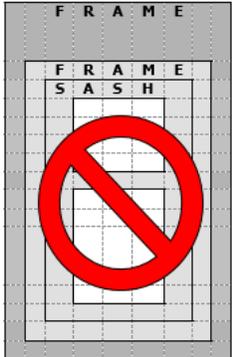
## **Requirements for Appropriate Window Replacements**

Approval for replacement windows will be granted on a case by case basis. In all cases, the Commission will require an installation which does not reduce the glass area of any window. Wood replacement windows are preferred. Wood windows clad in aluminum or fiberglass may be approved in some cases. If the applicant is proposing a new material, such as composite windows, they are encouraged to include photos of it in use and bring a sample. *Solid vinyl and vinyl clad windows will not be approved.*

The new window shall be the same configuration as the window it is replacing. For example, three panes over one, one over one, etc. Panes of glass in the replacement must match the size and shape of the original. The exterior trim installed after replacement must match the original. In cases of replacement windows where the glass is not physically divided into panes by muntins, the Commission will require that muntins be permanently adhered to the exterior of the window to replicate the appearance of the original windows.

*Clear glass is considered appropriate for the district; smoked or tinted glass may be approved on a case-by-case basis.*

## Breakdown of Window Rehabilitation and Replacement Methods

Frame Type	Description	Result	Can it be Permitted?
<p>#1 Original Window</p>  <p>The diagram shows a window with a rectangular frame labeled 'FRAME' at the top. Inside the frame, there is a sash labeled 'SASH' at the top, which holds two glass panes labeled 'GLASS'.</p>	<p>Original frame and sash are intact. Routine maintenance is done to preserve the window, including regular painting and infilling damage wood with such materials as epoxy.</p>	<p>The building retains its historic character-defining elements and there is no loss to historic integrity.</p>	<p><b>YES-</b> General repairs to the window may not require a permit, however full rehabilitations may be reviewed by the HDC. Contact the Preservation Planner to find out if your project requires a permit.</p>
<p>#2 Sash Kit installed in Old Frame/Replica Wood Sash</p>  <p>The diagram shows a window with a rectangular frame labeled 'FRAME' at the top. Inside the frame, there is a sash labeled 'SASH' at the top, which holds two glass panes labeled 'GLASS'.</p>	<p>Sash kits consist of a sash replacement only. The sash is the part of the window that holds the glass and moves up and down within the frame. Sash kits are installed by removing the old sash, leaving the old frame in place, and inserting the new sash in the old frame. Replica sashes that match the originals are also an option.</p>	<p>The windows retain some of their historic fabric and the original glass area is preserved.</p>	<p><b>YES-</b> This installation is appropriate and can be approved on a case-by-case basis.</p>
<p>#3 Full Frame Replica installed in a Rough Opening</p>  <p>The diagram shows a window with a rectangular frame labeled 'FRAME' at the top. Inside the frame, there is a sash labeled 'SASH' at the top, which holds two glass panes labeled 'GLASS'.</p>	<p>The old sash and the old frame are removed. The replacement window, ideally designed to replicate the historic window is inserted in the <u>rough opening</u>. The <u>glass area is not reduced</u></p>	<p>Although the historic fabric of the windows is lost, the overall historic integrity of the building is retained because the replacements match the original.</p>	<p><b>YES-</b> This installation is appropriate and can be approved on a case-by-case basis.</p>
<p>#4 Full Frame Replacement Installed in Old Frame</p>  <p>The diagram shows a window with a rectangular frame labeled 'FRAME' at the top. Inside the frame, there is a sash labeled 'SASH' at the top, which holds two glass panes labeled 'GLASS'. A red prohibition sign is overlaid on the glass area.</p>	<p>The old sash is removed, but the old frame is left in place. The replacement window (sash and frame) is inserted in the old frame. This results in two frames, the old frame and the replacement frame. The glass area is reduced</p>	<p>Although some historic fabric remains, the reduction of glass area substantially alters the historic character of the building.</p>	<p><b>NO-</b> This installation diminishes the historic integrity of the building and is not generally permitted.</p>