

What can I do with my old windows?

Many property owners probably have at least some windows that don't work, are drafty, and/or look pretty bad. It is common to think that the only, or at least the best way, to fix window problems is to remove the old windows and install new "highly efficient" replacement windows.

However, what many people don't know is there is likely still great value, efficiency and attractiveness present in the old windows. With proper repair, the old windows can offer an appearance that replacement windows can't match, as well as offer equal, or better, weather efficiency**.

***A 2002 study by the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory confirmed that installing a storm window over a historic window can achieve a similar thermal performance to that of a new low-E vinyl replacement window.*

Reasons to retain, maintain and repair old windows:

1) Replacement windows don't last.

- a. The old windows on most houses in Detroit have been in place since the house was constructed and can be over 100 years old. These windows are made from individual parts which means the windows to be repaired, allowing the owner to only spend money on the parts of the window that need to be fixed. If properly repaired and maintained, the original windows will usually survive longer and work better than replacement windows.



Parts of old windows. Photos: www.oldhousecrazy.com

- b. A replacement window is made as a unit; pieces can't be repaired. Therefore, if a part of the window breaks, an entirely new window needs to be installed. Depending on the fine print of a manufacturer's warranty, items such as labor and normal weathering of window frames, might not be covered. Warranties often come with multiple time frames, such as 10 years for the frame, and 20 years for the glass, yet the manufacturer advertises their windows as having a 20-year warranty. Photo: www.andersonwindows.com



2) *Windows are not the primary cause of heat loss.*

Windows, whether historic or new, are a source of heat loss because they are a poor thermal barrier compared to solid walls.

Walls and roof – discuss weatherstripping/caulking (caulk typically lasts about five years) and storms

3) *Take advantage of the previous owners' financial investment.*

- a. The density of the wood used in new replacement windows doesn't compare to the wood that was used 70 – 100 years ago. In the 19th and early 20th century, wood used in houses came from trees that were 100 – 200 years old. These trees had grown slowly over a long period of time; this slow growth caused the rings of a tree to be very tight which created dense, strong, and stable lumber.

Wood cut today is from new growth trees that is grown fast and the differences between old and new lumber is visible. Repairing the old wood frames will offer greater durability, efficiency, and longevity than what any new window frames can offer.



Photo: www.hullworks.com

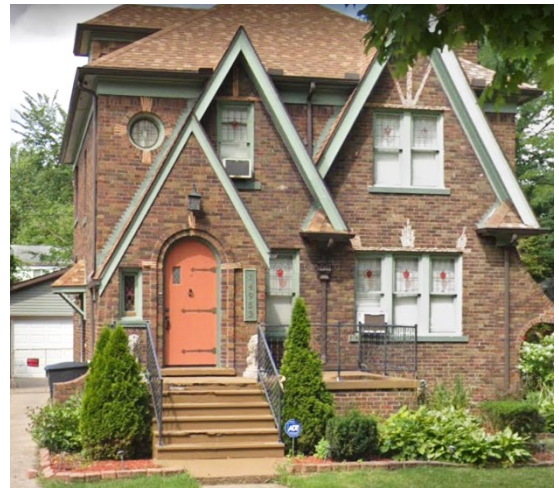
- b. Leaded glass windows -

4) *Help the environment – talk through with team – how far to go on this issue?*

(ex. adding building materials to landfills, toxins in pvc production, discuss lead in old paint and abatement)

5) *Your house is unique and important.*

Historic houses are not mass-produced houses built by a developer within a short period of time. Historic houses in Detroit have individualized features that identify the architectural style, time of construction, and usually the use of the building. There is financial (in addition to the visible architectural) value in the materials and decorative elements on a building which can be very expensive (or sometimes not possible) to reproduce. Hang on to them, repair them, restore them. Keep your house looking unique and contributing to the city's vibrant architectural history.



14953 Artesian



1714 Leverette, Corktown



4300 Glendale, RW



2310 Atkinson



Russell Woods - SE corner of Glendale and Petosky



15072 Artesian