



Peabody Historical Commission

24 Lowell Street, Peabody, Massachusetts 01960, Tel: 978-538-5777

THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF RESIDING A HISTORIC HOME

Choosing what siding to install can be an enemy of old houses. Siding an old house in vinyl or aluminum can mask serious moisture problems. Siding installation may eliminate trim and other distinctive aesthetic elements that create the uniqueness that historic homes are known for. If you are considering the purchase of a historic home, or you already are the proud owner of a local historical gem, use caution when it comes to siding.

Don't Do These Things

- **Don't cover a historic home with vinyl or aluminum siding.** [Vinyl siding](#) is touted as a "no maintenance" product. While it's true that vinyl itself does not require care, the problem is that vinyl siding does not allow an old house to breathe due to the unknown factor in moisture resistance in historic homes. When rain seeps in or interior water vapor can't escape due to poor ventilation, moisture becomes trapped behind the vinyl and slowly rots the underlying wood. This is also an invitation for termite infestation – but you'll never know about these problems because they will be completely hidden by sheets of vinyl or aluminum.



- **Don't remove architectural details.** The details of a historic home are usually unique to the home. Never allow a contractor to rip off wood window surrounds and other architectural components to make the siding process easier. These items are irreplaceable and add great value to your home.
- **Don't try to make a historic home look new.** A big part of the attraction to old homes is that they are made of natural materials that create character. Trying to make a historic home look "like new" will eliminate the authentic charm that makes it so special!

Do These Things

- **Determine if a home is subject to local protective legislation.** If your local municipality has designated a home as a historic property, there are likely preservation ordinances in place that govern design guidelines and procedures for proposed alterations to it. These are meant to preserve architectural character and protect your long-term investment. Before making any home improvements, contact your local historic board or the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Choose siding that can be painted.** Color is a unique feature of old houses, and homes are often repainted when they change ownership.
(See attached siding list.)



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Wood:

Clapboard siding on historic homes can be made from a variety of woods, including:

- **Pine:** Before 1950, pine was the most common wood used for clapboards.
- **Cedar:** A popular choice for clapboard siding, cedar is known for its attractive appearance and pleasant wood grain.
- **Fir:** Fir was often used for historic porches because it was harvested from old growth trees, making it more resistant to rot.
- **Cypress:** A reliable and low-maintenance wood that can withstand most elements. Cypress is so durable that it can last for generations.
- **Redwood:** Occasionally used for clapboards.

Clapboards are typically 1/2 inch thick and 6 inches wide, and are installed so that 4 inches of the total material is exposed to the weather. Clapboards come in two basic variations: beveled and flat/non-beveled.

Engineered wood siding:

Engineered wood siding is a lightweight, inexpensive alternative to traditional wooden clapboards. It's made of composite wood panels with uniform, manufactured grain patterns.

- **Timbers Diversified Wood Products:** Offers TruWood Siding, an engineered wood product designed to be durable
- **Georgia-Pacific Wood Products:** A leading producer of wood panels in North America

- **ACCOYA:** A manufacturer of Modified Wood Products
- **Allura:** A manufacturer of engineered wood siding
- **Celect:** A manufacturer of engineered wood siding
- **Diamond Kote Building Products:** A manufacturer of engineered wood siding
- **Everlast:** A manufacturer of advanced composite siding
- **James Hardie:** A siding brand that offers a 30-year warranty
- **LP Building Solutions:** A manufacturer of engineered wood siding
- **Nichiha:** A Japanese manufacturer that offers a variety of siding styles, including woodgrain shakes and shingles
- **PlyGem Elements:** A manufacturer of engineered wood siding
- **KWP:** Engineered wood siding
- **NEWTECHWOOD:** A manufacturer of advanced composite siding

Engineered wood siding is made by compressing wood strands that are coated with a resin binder. It's also known as manufactured wood siding, composite wood siding, or synthetic wood siding.

Engineered wood siding is durable and can withstand inclement weather. It's also treated to prevent rot and termites. However, it can have higher upfront costs, may require maintenance, and could fade over time

Fiber Cement:

- **LP Building Solutions**
- **James Hardie**
- **GAF**
- **Allura**
- **Woodtone**
- **Nichiha**
- **Cement Board Fabricators Product**
- **American fiber cement Corporation**
- **CertainTeed**

Fiber cement siding is made from a combination of the following ingredients:

- **Portland cement:** A binder made from clay, iron, and limestone
- **Wood pulp or cellulose fibers:** Makes the siding flexible and strong
- **Water:** Dissolves the wood pulp and hardens the cement
- **Fly ash or silica sand:** A filler that strengthens the mixture

The exact composition of fiber cement siding can vary by manufacturer