

## **Answers to Questions Posed to both the State and City Historical Preservation Office Regarding Making Changes to Historic Homes**

The following are questions that I posed to the City Historic Preservation Office (CHPO) in September of 2010. Liz Wilson responded from the CHPO and she forwarded my questions to Eric Vondy with the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) for his take on questions that related to that agency. Both Liz and Eric stated that the CHPO and the SHPO do not always agree on every change, so their answers may differ slightly. Below are their responses. Eric did not respond to questions that did not relate to his agency.

**Question 1 - Two strikes your out? If two types of exterior changes (i.e. replace the roof with architectural shingles & stucco over brick) are made to a home and the changes don't meet the historical guidelines, the home will no longer be eligible for the tax reduction?**

Liz from CHPO answered:

1. The two strikes rule is used by our office to determine whether a house is a contributor or non-contributor to the historic district where it is located. It references the loss of two "character-defining" or important features and/or materials on the house. The loss of an original roof material will only count against the house if the replacement roofing material is inappropriate. For example if the house originally had a wood shingle roof and it has been replaced with a clay mission tile roof -- that would count against it. If however, the wood shingle roof is replaced with a 30 year dimensional asphalt shingle roof (i.e. architectural shingles) that would be okay, because this sort of asphalt shingle is considered an acceptable replacement material for wood shingle roofs as it does somewhat mimic the appearance of a wood shingle roof. Each change is reviewed within the context of what is important about that particular house and that particular neighborhood so it's hard to make too many generalizations about what changes are and are not appropriate for a given house.

Eric from SHPO answered:

- 1) The two strikes rule applies to only 2 things: windows and siding/stucco. The building's original walls and windows are usually

the two primary characteristics that make a building historic. If you replace the windows and stucco the exterior of your brick house what is actually left that's historic that's visible to the public? Very little. From our perspective what's valuable is the actual materials and craftsmanship. That's why the home is historic. If that is lost then you just have an old building. From our perspective roofing was meant to be changed over time. A vast majority of the time SHPO is not concerned about roofing.

**Question 2 - What are the "biggies" that are not within the historical guidelines? I'm looking for the most common issues that cause problems, not all of them.**

- a. replacing steel case windows with sliding windows**
- b. using architectural shingles**
- c. stucco or siding over brick**
- d. putting up new structures (i.e. garages, circular driveways)**
- e. removing trees that are not posing a danger to the structure**

Liz from CHPO answered:

2. The biggest issue we face these days is replacement of historic windows with windows that are inappropriate because they don't match the original materials (vinyl windows have become very popular because they are so cheap and widely available), nor the original operating system (such as double-hung windows being replaced sliding windows instead of double or single hung windows), nor the original configuration (such as replacing 6 lite/pane casement windows 1 larger pane or lite). Window replacement DOES require a building permit so folks should be coming through our office first for review and approval of the proposed work before they do anything. We also deal with issues 'b' and 'c' to some extent but the window replacements are definitely the number one problem. Removal of landscaping typically does not require our review unless it is located in the right-of-way (such as the planting strip between the street and sidewalk) and is considered part of the historic streetscape and setting for the neighborhood or if the landscaping is considered part of a historic landscape design that is original or early to the house.

Eric from SHPO answered:

2) 90% of the phone calls I get about alterations to a property are regarding window replacement.

**Question 3 - If a person moves into NENA and they don't care about the historical tax reduction and let's say they want to replace their steel case windows with dual pane windows.....can they do this, provided they get the proper permits. Can the City's permitting division block them from being able to get permits to make this change to a historical home?**

Liz from CHPO answered:

3. CHPO does not administer the tax program -- that is done by SHPO. Nonetheless, CHPO must approve exterior changes -- such as window replacements -- that require a building permit, regardless of whether or not someone is enrolled in the tax program -- so this means that they need to first come to our office and talk to a planner. If the work will not affect the important, character-defining features or is not visible, then staff can most likely issue an over-the-counter approval, which is known as a Certificate of No Effect. If the work does not qualify for a CNE, then the property owner must apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness, which is the public hearing process. Staff cannot approve replacement of ALL original windows as a CNE. We can issue a CNE for window replacement IF the property owner agrees to keep their original windows on the front of the house and in the first side openings toward the front of the house and replace all others with windows that match the design, configuration, and materials (or acceptable replacement material -- i.e. aluminum is an acceptable replacement material for steel) of their original windows. Even if they go the CoA route, staff and the hearing officer will still work with them to guide them toward a replacement window choice that closely matches the design, configuration, and materials of the original windows.

Eric from SHPO answered:

Eric did not respond to this question

**Question 4 - Let's say the same scenario as in #3, but the homeowner is concerned about the tax reduction and had no strikes against their home...can they replace their windows with dual pane windows and have this be the one strike against them and still get the tax reduction?**

Liz from CHPO answered:

4. As far as CHPO is concerned, we will approve dual pane glass if it can be retrofit within the historic/original window sashes, which is typically the operable part of the window that sits within the frame and as long as it is not replacing some sort of specialty glass like beveled or stained glass. We will also approve dual pane window replacements (the whole window) in cases where the original windows are missing -- again, the design, configuration, and materials need to match or be an acceptable replacement for the originals.

Eric from SHPO answered:

- 4) Yes. However, in older buildings the most common place where energy is lost is through the roof. The other thing to be aware of is how long it will take to recoup the costs of replacing windows. I was told of someone who spent \$90,000 making his historic home more energy efficient. After he was done he was saving \$900 a year. It will take 100 years to make that money back.

**Question 5 - I know home owners do not have to abide by getting paint colors approved for their homes, but can a home owner paint over brick that has not been painted already?**

Liz from CHPO answered:

5. CHPO discourages the application of paint over brick if the house was originally an unpainted brick house, although this change does not require a building permit. However, if the property has Conservation Easement on it because it has received grant funds for exterior work in the past, then painting unpainted brick walls is absolutely not allowed.

Eric from SHPO answered:

5) Yes, unless unpainted brick is a characteristic of the neighborhood. At this point there no historic districts in Phoenix in which that is a characteristic. However, there is at least one neighborhood in Phoenix that is probably eligible for the National Register in which unpainted brick would be a primary characteristic.

**Question 6 - The dual pane windows seem to be very confusing for so many of us in the neighborhood. I thought you couldn't use dual pane unless you could fit the glass into the existing frame work. Are there situations where the HPO will allow dual pane windows?**

Liz from CHPO answered:

6. See my answer to question #4 above. The only other circumstance where replacement of historic windows with dual pane windows might be acceptable is in situations where the original windows are beyond repair.

Eric from SHPO answered:

Eric did not respond to this question.