

OGB WINDOW POLICY:

Windows are a character-defining feature of buildings in Georgetown, serving both functional and aesthetic purposes. The type, size, location, material, glazing, and trim of windows help define a building's architectural style and changes to them can have a dramatic impact on a buildings appearance. Collectively, windows define the historic aesthetic and character of Georgetown and preservation of historic windows is key to maintaining this character.

GUIDELINES:

The Old Georgetown Board (OGB) is committed to preserving wood windows, especially those that are difficult or impossible to replace with old growth wood, hand-blown glass, and unique details. It is the Board's policy that wood windows installed prior to 1950 be restored where possible. Old Georgetown Board staff will make a determination on the age, condition, and type of windows in question, supported by appropriate documentation supplied by the applicant.

Where historic wood windows do not exist, or are deteriorated beyond repair, the OGB supports replacement windows that are in keeping with the style of the building and in materials compatible with the historic district. Generally, this means wood, true-divided light windows on street-facing elevations. The Board is committed to sustainability and supports simulated divided light replacement wood windows on non-street facing elevations. Interior storm windows or energy panels are acceptable where insulated glazing is not appropriate. High-quality fiberglass or aluminum-clad wood replacement windows are generally acceptable on non-street facing elevations of buildings or additions constructed after 1975, when these materials came into more widespread use.

The OGB recommends that replacement windows be compatible with the style of the building.

Unfortunately, the windows on many buildings in Georgetown have been replaced with stylistically inappropriate windows in an attempt to make the building appear older than it actually is. A typical example are Victorian-era buildings that originally were constructed with large two-over-two or one-over-one windows that have since been replaced with six-over-six Federal style windows, typically in the mid-twentieth century. In these instances, the OGB prefers that windows be replaced to match the original design, however, sometimes the façade has been altered so greatly or the context of the alterations is significant enough that the OGB may recommend restoration or replacement in-kind of the multi-light windows.

DETAILS:

- Visible vinyl jamb liners are discouraged. If your window manufacturer does not offer authentic wood jambs, consider a single-hung window without the lower jamb liner or wood jamb liner covers.
- If historic wood frames and brickmold exist, the OGB will require these be retained and restored in place. If the sash are not historic or deteriorated beyond repair, the OGB typically prefers to see replacement sash kits that do not contain a sub-frame. The use of a sub-frame (often called “insert” or “pocket” windows) decreases the total glazing area, thus altering the style and aesthetic of the house. High-quality, paintable fiberglass insert windows are acceptable on buildings or additions constructed after 1975, if it can be shown the jamb tolerances are minimal.
- Interior screens are preferred, however if exterior screens are desired, half-screens with a highly transparent mesh are acceptable, whereas full screens are not permitted.

- Muntins should always have a putty profile. Staff can help you determine the appropriate muntin width and light configuration for replacements. If simulated divided light and double-glazed replacement windows are proposed, the window must have an internal spacer bar in a mid-tone color. Between-the-glass or “sandwich” muntins are never appropriate.
- All replacement glazing should be clear and untinted without reflective coatings. If using Low-emissivity (LoE) coatings, the OGB recommends a lower emissivity coating be used to avoid tinted hues or reflectivity; glass designated with LoE 100 or 200 series generally meets this requirement.

HELPFUL TIPS:

The Board recommends regular maintenance of wood windows to increase their longevity. This includes regular painting, caulking, and weather-strip replacement, as necessary. If your windows are historic, it is recommended that you seek the services of a qualified window restoration specialist with the skills and knowledge to work with historic glass and mortise-and-tenon joinery. Qualified restoration specialists are also often equipped to deal with lead paint and other hazardous materials sometimes encountered with historic building materials.

OTHER RESOURCES:

- [*The Secretary of the Interior Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, & Reconstructing Historic Buildings*](#)
- [*District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office Window Repair and Replacement Preservation and Design Guidelines*](#)
- [*Submission Requirements for Old Georgetown Board*](#)



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OLD GEORGETOWN BOARD DESIGN GUIDELINES WINDOWS

Windows are a character-defining feature of a building that serve both functional and aesthetic purposes. The size, type, location, and trim of windows help define a building's architectural style, and changes to windows can have a dramatic impact on a building's appearance. Collectively, windows help define the overall character of Georgetown. The Old Georgetown Board supports stylistically appropriate replacement windows where original or historic windows do not exist. Generally, windows installed prior to 1950 are considered historic. Applicants should always arrange a site visit with Old Georgetown Board staff so that staff can make a determination on the age of existing windows and recommendations for appropriate replacements.



An architectural drawing of the same houses in the photo (right), from 1951 showing the original window style as two-over-two. CFA staff will conduct research to determine the historically correct style of windows for a property.



The existing six-over-six windows were installed on this pair of houses in 1951. During the mid-century, many homeowners in Georgetown replaced historic windows with colonial style windows in an attempt to make the house appear older than it was.

RECOMMENDED

- Retain and repair historic window panes, sashes and frames using a qualified window restoration specialist.
- Where original brickmold exists, use wood sash kits that preserve the historic, hand-worked frames.
- Select replacement windows that are appropriate to the historic period or architectural style of the building.
- Install replacement windows that fit the original window opening, such as full-frame replacements or sash kits.
- Single-glazed windows on front and side elevations. Where added energy efficiency is desired, interior storm windows are preferred.
- Perform regular painting and re-sealing of windows to ensure longevity of windows and to promote sustainability.

NOT RECOMMENDED

- Any material other than wood on street-facing elevations.
- Use of insert windows that decrease the overall glass area.
- Insulated or double-glazed windows on street-facing elevations.
- Tinted or reflective glass.
- Vinyl windows.
- Any window that has "sandwich" muntins between the glass, snap-on, or removable muntins.
- Visible vinyl jamb liners.
- Exterior screens are discouraged, but half-screens with high transparency are acceptable.

WHAT ABOUT MODERN MATERIALS?

Generally, aluminum-clad wood, fiberglass or wood composite materials are acceptable in minimally visible locations or on non-street facing elevations of new construction and those buildings or additions constructed after 1975. Vinyl is not appropriate. Windows should have clear and untinted glass and internal spacer bars in a medium value color.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

e-mail: georgetown@cfa.gov

phone: 202.504.2200

web: www.cfa.gov/project-review/georgetown



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OLD GEORGETOWN BOARD DESIGN GUIDELINES WINDOWS

SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

- ☐ A map or aerial image showing the property's location in Georgetown.
- ☐ A photo showing the entire building facade(s). If you are not submitting architectural drawings, please mark up a copy of your photo to show which windows are proposed for replacement and key the window in the photograph to your cut sheet.
- ☐ Photos that show the existing windows' condition and design. It is generally a good idea to include two or three photographs from the exterior that depict the typical condition of the windows.
- ☐ An elevation drawing of the existing and proposed window replacement, if proposing alterations to the window openings or substantial renovation.
- ☐ Specifications and/or cut sheets that describe the proposed replacement windows. This is generally provided by the window sales rep or contractor. This should include a line-item cut sheet, with details for each window proposed for replacement with information such as the installation method, material, hardware, glass type, measurements, and muntin profiles.
- ☐ A measured section drawing through the jamb of the proposed window(s) and the existing window(s)
- ☐ A section drawing with dimensions of the proposed muntin if multi-light windows are proposed.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

[Anatomy of a window](#)

[District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office Window Repair and Replacement Preservation and Design Guidelines](#)

[The Secretary of the Interior Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, & Reconstructing Historic Buildings](#)

[Old Georgetown Board and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts website](#)

THE RESEARCH SHOWS....

[Forbes Magazine - Don't Buy Replacement Windows for Your Old House](#)

[Saving Windows, Saving Money: Evaluating the Energy Performance of Window Retrofit and Replacement](#)



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COMMERCIAL SIGNS

Signs help draw customers inside businesses, and they play a crucial role in maintaining the character of the Old Georgetown Historic District. The Old Georgetown Board (OGB) reviews the compatibility of new signs by considering the type, size, location, material, and illumination on sign applications. The District's Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) regulates the installation of signs, controlling the number, size, location, and materials. All new signs in Georgetown must exceed allowable signage area permitted by D.C. Building Code and must be consistent with the [D.C. Historic Preservation Office sign guidelines](#); OGB recommendations may be more restrictive than what D.C. regulations allow.

GENERAL CRITERIA

SIZE

- Should be compatible with the scale of the building.
- Letters and logos should be no taller than 12 inches.

LOCATION

- Signs should not obstruct or damage architectural features or ornament.
- One principal sign per street façade per business; storefront or door decal signs should be limited in size and related to operation hours and secondary information.
- Wall signs are appropriate for most ground-floor businesses; projecting signs are appropriate for non-ground-floor businesses or where retail frontage is not on the street. Banner signs may be installed at Cady's Alley and considered on a case-by-case basis elsewhere.

CONTENT

- Limit text to the name of the business; listing of products or services is not compatible.
- Hours of operation and secondary information may be displayed on storefront, but not on main sign.
- No more than two colors, including black or white.
- No trademark symbols or visual clutter.
- One line of text in business name is preferred.

ILLUMINATION

- Due to the high level of street lighting in the historic district, non-illuminated signs are preferred.
- Internal illumination, uplighting, new neon signs, and visible raceways, conduits, and junction boxes are not allowed.
- If light fixtures are used, they should be as small and minimal in number as possible.
- Halo lighting or reverse-channel lighting may be considered appropriate.

MOUNTING

- Signs must be carefully mounted in such a way as to minimize damage to the building, including installing through mortar joints or using non-staining, removable epoxy or non-staining structural silicone.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS BY SIGN TYPE

WALL AND WINDOW

- Window signs should not obstruct interior views, should not contain redundant information with main sign, and should not contain tag lines.
- Pin-mounted and reverse-channel-letter signs may be installed on a panel to minimize wall penetrations.

PROJECTING

- Projecting signs must be rigid and may not pivot or swing back and forth.
- Must have a minimum clearance height of 8 feet.
- Brackets on fabric banner signs must be no longer than the width of the banner. It is preferred that brackets are terminated with simple flat ends.

AWNING

- Signage should be limited to valance and should be no taller than 12 inches.
- Should be made of treated, weather-durable fabric.
- Should have no sides and no enclosed underside.
- Shape must correspond to and fit within the opening at which it is installed.
- Should not be illuminated, internally or externally.
- Must have a minimum clearance height of 8 feet.

HISTORIC

- While abandoned signs from recent tenants should be removed, retention of historic signs is encouraged. Historic signs do not reduce the amount of allowable signage.

TEMPORARY

- Temporary signs are defined as signs that will be in place less than 60 days and are reviewed by the DC Historic Preservation Office. Any sign that will be in place for more than 60 days must be reviewed by the OGB.
- The Board strongly discourages visual clutter in the public space, such as sandwich boards.



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COMMERCIAL SIGNS

SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

- ☐ A map or aerial image showing the property's location in Georgetown.
- ☐ Photos of the property, including one showing the entire building facade.
- ☐ Scaled drawings of sign – front, side, and section – including dimensions, materials, and mounting details.
- ☐ Full scaled and dimensioned elevation drawings or photos, illustrating existing and proposed signs on building.
- ☐ Illumination details with power source information.