

City of Hartford

Department of Development Services, Planning Division



Historic Preservation Guidelines - Tear Away Sheets

Paints and Stains

GENERAL

RECOMMENDED

- Inspecting painted elements before beginning any project to determine whether repainting is necessary or if cleaning is all that is required.
- Making sure new coats of paint being applied are chemically compatible with existing coats. Prepare painted surfaces before repainting.
- Repainting surfaces regularly to protect and maintain historic materials.
- Removing only the deteriorated outer layers of paint before repainting. Use only the gentlest removal methods possible (such as handscraping, brushing, and handsanding.)
- Limiting repainting to the areas of the building showing deterioration. Too many paint coatings can damage paint and cause cracking.
- Retaining the paint, finishes, and colors on historic wooden, masonry, and metal elements.
- Choosing appropriate paint colors that will not look out of place with surrounding buildings.
- Following manufacturers' instructions in applying paint.
- Using two finishing coats of paint.
- Allowing more time for paint to dry when the weather is very warm or humid.
- Using separate colors for the body and trim of architectural elements.

NOT RECOMMENDED

- Painting historic architectural elements that have historically been unpainted.
- Permanently removing paint from elements that have historically been painted. Paint protects materials from moisture, UV rays, and decay.

WOOD

RECOMMENDED

- Caulking joints to prevent moisture from getting into adjoining wood surfaces and causing paint to peel.
- Monitoring other sources of moisture such as clogged gutters, damp basements, boards located too close to bare ground, damp or mildewed wood, and failure to adequately vent moist areas such as bathrooms, kitchens, and laundry areas.
- Preparing wood surfaces well before painting.
- Removing all mildew from historic surfaces before repainting them. Oil based paints are especially likely to get moldy and mildewy. Mildew can be removed by scrubbing with a commercial mildew wash or a solution made of one part household bleach to three parts water, then rinsing with detergent, then water. If paint below the mildew is undamaged, then repainting is not necessary. If the paint has been damaged, anti-mildew chemicals should be added to the primer and paint so that the mildew will not come back.
- Removing paint blisters by scraping and sanding. If the blister was caused by moisture, remove the source of the moisture. Blistering is usually the first stage of peeling.
- Using with extreme care electric hot-air guns or electric heat plates when paint is so deteriorated that total paint removal is necessary prior to repainting.
- Supplementing hand and heat methods of paint removal with mild chemical paint strippers. Detachable wooden elements such as shutters, doors, and columns may--with the proper safeguards--be dipped in chemicals to strip them of paint. Painted surfaces can be washed with gentle cleaners like tri-sodium phosphate (TSP) to remove chalk, powder, and mildew.
- Washing chemicals off of stripped surfaces before repainting.
- Stripping paint to bare wood only when a) paint deterioration is extreme, showing continuous patterns of deep cracks or peeling down to exposed wood or b) doors, shutters, or windows have been painted shut or c) new wood is being pieced-in next to an existing feature.
- Filling cracks in wood with flexible caulk to protect materials and prolong paint life. Caulk should expand and contract with the material that it has been inserted into.
- Finishing surface preparation by coating wood with a high-quality primer/sealer. The primer/sealer should be allowed to dry completely before painting. This coating will restore oil to weathered materials, seal surfaces, and provide a uniform film that the finish coat can bond to easily.

Continued on Reverse

WOOD

RECOMMENDED (Continued)

- Applying chemical preservatives to wood features such as beam ends or outriggers. These features are exposed to decay hazards, but are traditionally unpainted.

NOT RECOMMENDED

- Stripping painted wooden surfaces to bare wood, then applying clear finishes or stains in order to create a “natural look.”
- Stripping wood bare and not repainting it.
- Removing paint that is not peeling or damaged.
- Radically changing the color or appearance of historically painted surfaces.
- Removing paint using sandblasters, harsh chemicals, torches, or by high pressure water blasting. These methods will damage historic surfaces.
- Using heated paint removal devices improperly. They can burn historic wooden surfaces.
- Soaking detachable wooden elements in chemical paint de-strippers for too long. This can cause the wood grain to be raised and the surface to roughen.
- Chemically thinning paint that has thickened because of storage in cold temperatures. Cold paint should be warmed in water or placed in the sun until it reaches a normal stirring consistency.
- Painting damp surfaces. Waiting for wood to dry before applying paint will extend the life of the paint job. Moisture trapped behind paint evaporates when exposed to the sun, causing blistering. A “moisture meter” can be purchased from some paint dealers to determine when wood is completely dry.
- Painting wood surfaces in direct sunlight. Heat blisters can result from this practice. This problem occurs more frequently with dark paint colors that absorb more heat.

MASONRY

RECOMMENDED

- Removing flaking and chalking paint from masonry by bristle brushing or low pressure steam cleaning.
- Removing salt deposits from painted brick before repainting. It can look like a white stain on unpainted brick. A four percent (4%) solution of hydrofluoric acid or pure vinegar may be necessary to remove this salt.
- Rinsing masonry surfaces with clean water to remove any deposits of dirt, powdered masonry, or chemical residue before painting.
- Filling the cracks in clean, dried masonry surfaces with masonry patching compound, latex concrete patch, or caulking compound before painting.

NOT RECOMMENDED

- Using oil-based paint on masonry because it can chemically degrade mortar. Instead, use a breathable exterior latex masonry paint.

METAL

RECOMMENDED

- Practicing good surface preparation techniques. Paint peeling on metal surfaces is almost exclusively caused by poor surface preparation. Painted metal surfaces must be cleaned of all rust, dirt, powder, and loose flaking paint, leaving only bare metal.
- Using conditioner or rust-proof galvanized metal primer as a first coat before any exterior enamels are used as finishing coats.
- Brushing rust, scale, paint, and dirt from iron surfaces before painting. Commercial rust removers may also be used.
- Lightly sanding existing paint to ensure adhesion with new paint.
- Minimizing the appearance of replacement gutters, downspouts, screen and storm doors and windows, vents, and fire escapes by painting them to match the color of appropriate architectural features.

NOT RECOMMENDED

- Painting or coating metals that were meant to be exposed, such as copper, bronze, and stainless steel.

For Historic Preservation Application Assistance, Please Contact:

Ken Schwartz, City of Hartford Planning Division
email: kschwartz@hartford.gov
phone: 860-757-9047

Becky Parkin, City of Hartford Planning Division
email: parkr001@hartford.gov
phone: 860-757-9056

For Historic Preservation Information of a General Nature

Greg Secord, Hartford Historic Preservation Commission
email: gsecord@hartford.gov
phone: 860-757-9428

Laura Knott-Twine, Hartford Preservation Alliance
email: lktwine@hartfordpreservation.org
phone: 860-570-0331

Don Poland, Neighborhoods of Hartford, Inc.
email: prideblocks@hartford.gov
phone: 860-524-1758