

## Appeal of HPC Window & Door Replacement Decision at 3112 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave S

In his staff report about the proposed alterations to the historic Bennett house at 3112 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave S, Mr. John Smoley made several errors regarding the Henry Bennett home, beginning with making an assumption that a rear door couldn't possibly be original.

With no evidence whatsoever, Mr Smoley conveniently summarily decided and conveyed to commissioners that this portion of the house was an addition from a later period. There is no evidence to support this claim, and tremendous evidence to the contrary including photographic evidence from 1890. Mr. Smoley further claimed that the door had been extensively altered (a deadbolt lock was added and the bottom trimmed) and therefor justified recommending that Healy Historic District guidelines be ignored, and the door replaced. The door is in fact original and should be restored, not replaced. This would cost less than replacement and is required by the guidelines.

Mr. Smoley also recommended that the Healy District Guidelines be ignored with respect to the requirement for wood storm windows. Smoley based this recommendation on the fact that metal is cheaper and the idea that children might be safer from falling out the windows with aluminum storms rather than the required wood storms. There are numerous ways to ensure the safety of children that do not involve metal storms.

Healy Guidelines also require that original windows be retained where possible, and go on to specify what replacement windows should consist of in cases where they must be replaced. While the proposed replacement windows do comply with the guidelines, Mr. Smoley himself admitted in his testimony to the HPC that most of the historic windows could be renovated and become lead free. 3116 3<sup>rd</sup>, the house right next to 3112 3<sup>rd</sup> recently had all of their windows renovated with great success, and at a fraction of the cost of new windows.

In the Certificate of Appropriateness prepared by Mr. Smoley, the criteria of keeping the alterations compatible with the period of significance was essentially ignored, clearly because these alterations do not achieve that. Smoley focused instead on the exterior proportions which is a red herring. The proposed work DOES impair the historic integrity of the property.

The staff recommendation adopted by the HPC creates a precedent that could render the already weak guidelines impotent. Over the past twenty years, other Healy District owners have made significant investments in maintaining their properties within the guidelines. Other homes in the district have used public money to abate lead, and have done so within the guidelines.

The Minnesota Environmental Resource Act (which applies to historic properties) says that economics shall not be the basis for damage to historic properties. Mr. Smoley is not a lead expert; there are ways to remove lead that do not require replacement of historic components of the property.

Unfortunately, an emotional argument for these alterations coupled with a lack of research, due diligence, and consideration on Mr. Smoley's part lead to a staff recommendation that directly violates two of the historic district guidelines, and skirts the original window retention guidelines. The HPC commissioner who made the motion to approve specifically cited supporting staff recommendations as her reason for making the motion.

We believe that this reckless and disrespectful decision would not have happened in a less diverse, more affluent neighborhood, and strongly feel it must be appealed and overturned to maintain the integrity of not only this home but also our entire historic district.



# HEALY BLOCK HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

(Adopted November 13, 1990)

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## II. Guidelines For Rehabilitation of Buildings

### 1. Roofs

#### A. Shingles

Shingles shall emulate wood-sawn shingles or slate. Square tab asphalt shingles are recommended. Decorative metal roofing is permitted and encouraged on decorative roof elements such as a conical roof.

#### B. Skylights

When skylights are added to structures, they shall be located on non-primary facades. They shall be flat in design such that they are flush with the plane of the roof. They shall not exceed 4' X 6' in dimension.

#### C. Chimneys

Repair of chimneys shall be made with like material and emulate original design. Mortar color shall match existing mortar color and composition. The content of the mortar shall be compatible with the original mortar.

New chimneys shall be of dark brick and shall emulate original design.

#### D. Gutters

New or replacement gutters shall be constructed of wood or metal and shall be of painted finish. Copper gutters shall be allowed to weather naturally. Vinyl gutters shall not be permitted.

#### E. Eaves

New or replacement eaves shall be constructed of wood. Brackets shall be retained, and lookouts shall be left uncovered consistent with the original design. Vinyl or metal eaves shall not be permitted.

### 2. Porches

A. No original fabric of ornamental quality shall be removed from the porch.

B. Porches shall function per their original design and shall not be enclosed.

C. If new porches are added or original porches are rebuilt, they shall be in the spirit of the original design. Porches shall have shed roofs.

D. Railing and wood columns

Replacement railings shall match the original based on historical documentation. When historical documentation does not exist, they shall emulate the spirit of the original design by drawing from other elements of the home.

E. Skirting

Replacement railings shall match the original based on historical documentation. When historical documentation does not exist they shall emulate the spirit of the original, drawing from other features of the homes.

F. Steps shall be constructed of wood in lieu of stone or concrete.

3. Balconies

A. No original fabric or ornamental quality shall be removed from balconies.

B. Balconies shall remain as designed and not be enclosed.

C. Replacement of original fabric shall match the original based on historic documentation. When historic documentation does not exist, they shall emulate the spirit of the original, drawing from other features of the home.

D. New balconies shall be designed in the spirit of the original design of the house.

4. Exterior siding

A. New or replacement siding shall match the original. Aluminum, vinyl, or particle board siding shall not be permitted.

B. Siding width shall match the original.

C. All siding and trim which is intact under contemporary siding shall not be removed (rotted siding shall be replaced).

D. Sandblasting of siding, trim or decorative features to remove paint shall not be permitted.

E. Siding and trim shall have a painted finish and shall not be of natural finish, except for wood doors (if applicable).

5. Windows

A. Replacement or new storm windows and screens shall be constructed of wood and of a painted finish. Vinyl or metal cladding shall not be permitted.

B. Replacement or new windows shall have wood double-hung frames to match the original. Vinyl or metal cladding shall not be permitted.

C. All original art glass or decorative windows such as round top windows shall be retained.

D. Replacement or new windows shall match the original in proportion and size.

6. Foundations

A. Stucco or wood veneers shall not be permitted over existing stone foundations.

- B. Replacement or new foundations shall be constructed of stone or rockface concrete block to match the original.
- C. Plain concrete block shall not be permitted.

7. Doors

- A. Original doors and transoms shall be retained.
- B. New or replacement doors shall be raised panel solid wood doors of stained or painted finish.

8. Decks

- A. Decks shall be designed to reflect the spirit of the home. They shall be of painted wood finish. They will be individually reviewed for their design. Contemporary decks shall not be permitted.

9. Stairs

- A. Exit stairs which are added to multi-unit homes shall be located on the rear facade. They shall be of painted wood finish.

**III. Guidelines For Infill Construction**

1. Garages or carriage houses

- A. The roof pitch shall be consistent with other roof pitches on the lot.
- B. Garages or carriage houses shall be detached from the main house.
- C. Siding and trim shall match that of the house. No vinyl, aluminum, or particle board siding shall be permitted.
- D. Garage doors shall be flush panel of painted finish. Translucent garage doors shall not be permitted.
- E. Exposed foundations shall be stone or rockface concrete block.
- F. Eaves shall match those of the house.
- G. Shingles shall be square tab asphalt shingles.
- H. Skylights shall be flat in design and not exceed 4' X 6' in dimension.
- I. Windows shall be double hung wood frame of painted finish. Vinyl or metal clad windows are not permitted. Proportions of the windows shall be consistent with those of the house.
- J. The design shall be in the spirit of the main house. Decorative features found on the main house are encouraged.

2. Infill or replacement structures

- A. Material and features

Materials to be used for new construction and the design of architectural features shall be in accordance with the guidelines set forth for existing structures, items 1 through 9 in Section I.

B. Design intent

The design shall be consistent with the spirit of Victorian style and homes adjacent the site. This style shall be set forth in proportion, scale, and architectural features. It is desirable to include elements of the home such as featured entryways, porches, roof ornamentation, and special windows. Front porches are a required feature of the design.

C. Setbacks

New homes shall align with the setback of existing structures.

D. Massing

The height, width, and roof pitches shall match that of existing homes at the primary facade.

3. Landscaping

A. New fences shall be constructed of wrought iron or wood. Fence design shall be consistent with the Victorian style.

B. Chain link fencing shall not be permitted.

C. Retaining walls if required shall be reviewed for individual merit. Retaining walls shall be constructed of stone. Wood timbers, keystone, or concrete block shall not be permitted.

**Community Planning & Economic Development  
Planning Division**  
250 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 300 PSC  
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## MEMORANDUM

TO: Heritage Preservation Commission  
FROM: John Smoley and Aaron Hanauer  
DATE: September 14, 2009  
RE: Embodied Energy, Energy Efficiency, and Wood Windows

### Executive Summary

Embodied energy and wood windows have received considerable attention in recent years in sustainability and energy efficiency discussions. This memo discusses embodied energy and summarizes the significance of wood windows and how repairing rather than replacing can be beneficial from an economic development, sustainability, and retention of community character.

### Embodied Energy, Energy Efficiency and Wood Window Significance

The topics of embodied energy, energy efficiency, and windows, in particular wood windows, have received considerable attention in recent years. Embodied energy is defined as the amount of energy that was required to extract, process, package, transport, install, and recycle or dispose of materials that make up a building's construction. Energy efficiency is defined as using less energy/electricity to perform the same function.

When looking at sustainable practices embodied energy is an important element to consider. The National Trust has created an embodied energy calculator to measure the energy that is within an existing property and the amount of energy needed to raze, load, and haul away construction materials <http://blogs.nationaltrust.org/preservationnation/?p=438>. For example, the embodied energy calculator estimates that tearing down of an 1,800 square foot house and hauling the material away is equivalent to using 262 barrels of oil. If a new 1,800 square-foot house is built in its place, it is equivalent to using an additional 260 barrels of oil. Therefore, the total energy replacement cost is estimated to be 522 barrels of oil.

It is realized that every building can not be rehabbed or reused; however, when feasible and possible, the rehabilitation and reuse of an existing structure can be the ultimate recycling, in addition to preserving community character and providing construction jobs.

Similar to rehabbing a building rather than raising a building, the repair of wood windows over replacement is an option that can provide economic development, sustainability (including embodied energy and energy efficiency), and community character benefits. The following is a summary of the potential benefits of choosing repair over replacement.

## Economic Development

1. **Repair is difficult to outsource.** While replacement windows can be manufactured elsewhere, repair of building materials generally occurs onsite or nearby. This provides a competitive advantage to local craftsmen and genuinely helps build and maintain local jobs.
2. **Repair requires more than assembly line skills.** While industrialization did help generate cost savings through mechanization and mass production, it also reduced craftsmen to assembly line workers with fewer skills, less independence, and diminished pride. Programs that encourage repair of existing building materials offer local workers an opportunity to become craftsmen again.

## Sustainability

1. **The “greenest” building is the one that is already built.** Americans demolish 200,000 buildings on average each year. The resulting 124 million tons of debris could construct a wall 30 feet high and 30 feet thick around the entire American coastline. Every bit of building material that was replaced when it could have been repaired adds to this problem. Repairing, rather than replacing, building materials slows the harvesting of increasingly scarce raw materials and reduces the energy needed to produce new building materials.
2. **Repairing historic wood windows saves energy.** Windows that are over 60 years old were likely constructed of high-quality, dense, and durable old-growth wood. Studies show that the repairing, sealing, and caulking of original windows, when a high quality storm window is added, can match the energy efficiency of a replacement window. Additionally, it can take up to 240 years to recoup enough money in energy savings to pay for the cost of installing “energy-efficient” windows when the embodied energy inherent in existing windows is taken into account. Consider the fossil fuels used to extract raw materials, shape them into windows, deliver them to building sites, and power their installation. Existing building materials possess a massive amount of embodied energy that should be considered in energy efficiency calculations.
3. **Sustainability means repairing, rather than replacing, contamination.** Critics who claim that lead paint impregnated wood makes remediation and repair of wood windows excessively expensive do not consider the increased space and maintenance costs at landfills that have to safely encapsulate entire windows, rather than just their lead paint. Furthermore, their replacements often produce more contamination at their point of production, in homes, and in landfills when they are thrown away. For example, the United States Environmental Protection Agency has classified vinyl chloride, used in vinyl windows and siding, as a Group A human carcinogen. Repairing vinyl windows is far more difficult than repairing wood windows, guaranteeing that vinyl windows will appear in landfills at much higher rates than wood windows.

## Community Character

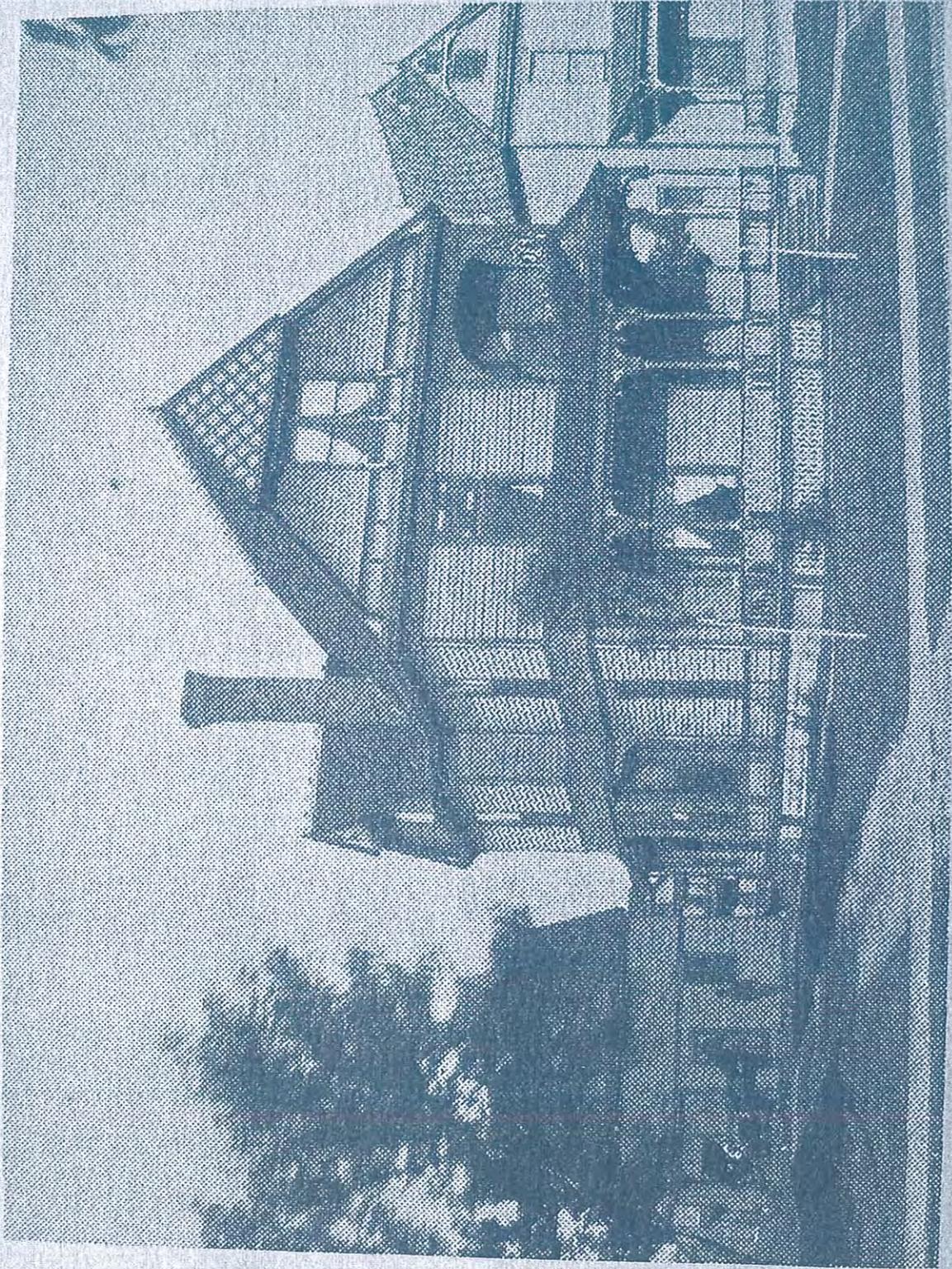
1. **Repair maintains community character.** Windows are the “eyes of a building” and are often one of a building’s character defining features. Programs that encourage individualized repair of existing building materials satisfy homeowners who do not have the latest, manufactured home, but have unique, character-defining features of our city, many of which have weathered every economic downturn and energy crisis for over a century.

### **Attachments:**

Appendix A: Historic Wood Windows Handout from National Trust

Appendix B: Major Sources of Energy Loss

*H.H. Bennett family house at  
3112 3rd Ave. So.  
c. 1890  
courtesy of Marion Bennett Phillippi*





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