



MEMORANDUM

Date: December 16, 2025

To: Chairman Haven Burkee and Historic Architectural Review
Commission Members

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Subject: HARC Commission Discussion and Direction on Windows in the historic district

Introduction

Staff are seeking feedback from the HARC Commissioners on recent window issues raised mostly by contractors, specifically wood windows not meeting current window pressures, and how HARC staff should proceed in evaluating window materials, replacements, and compatibility going forward.

Background

Several contractors have approached staff stating that wood windows are increasingly difficult to source for products that meet current wind-pressure requirements. This conflict between available types of windows and the current HARC Guidelines has created challenges during the COA review process at staff level. Staff are compiling how other historic jurisdictions handle window material requirements and impact-rated products on historic structures.

Many Florida and national preservation programs reinforce the same core principles such as prioritizing repair, maintaining original materials where feasible, and ensuring replacements that match the visual character of historic structures.

- Miami-Dade County emphasizes matching the front façade first and selecting impact-rated systems that closely resemble the original window's design, with clear, non-reflective glass preferred.

- Jacksonville stresses repair over replacement, requires recessed window placement, and maintains strict expectations for material compatibility including generally keeping wood on historic structures.
- Gainesville prefers replacement windows to use the same materials as the original, allowing compatible substitutes only on secondary elevations and only case-by-case.
- St. Augustine requires materials and detailing that match the district's traditional construction and mandates in-kind replacement for significant elevations.
- Charleston requires strict in-kind replacement and does not permit synthetic materials (vinyl, fiberglass, etc.) for historic residences.
- Savannah focuses on visual compatibility and notes that most windows in the district are wood, reinforcing material continuity.

Overall, these guidelines show a strong emphasis on maintaining original window materials, with wood replaced with wood on prominent elevations. Alternate materials such as aluminum, vinyl, and fiberglass are generally restricted or allowed on a case-by-case basis. These guidelines highlight the contradiction between the preservation for wood windows and the fact that many wood products are not meeting current wind-pressure requirements.

Conclusion

Staff requests HARC Commission discussion and direction on the preferred path forward for window replacements in the historic district.