

Why Preserving Your Old Wood Windows is the Greenest Choice

How often have you heard someone say something to the effect of,

“This old house has great bones, you just need to replace the windows”?



It's a noble (and cost-effective) endeavor to make your building's windows as energy efficient as possible, but there is no need to rush into replacing your old windows. Many historic property owners feel that they are faced with an unfortunate choice: maintain the historic integrity of their building by keeping the old windows (and perhaps allowing unwanted drafts that raise your utility bills), or replace them with newer, energy-efficient options.

This is not a choice you have to make.

Check out this list of myths debunking many of the reasons people are told they need to replace their home's original windows and explain why it's the green choice.

Debunking Myths About Old Wood Windows

Myth #1: Old windows are not energy efficient.

Truth: Old windows can be made just as energy efficient as new, double-glazed windows if properly fitted with storm windows and quality weather stripping.

Myth #2: Old windows never operate properly; the sash sticks or falls down.

Truth: Windows can be made safe and convenient to operate by removing paint build-up, replacing broken sash cords, and ensuring that trim stops and sash locks are working as intended.

Myth #3: Vinyl windows last longer and require no maintenance.

Truth: Properly maintained, wood expectancy than vinyl. Wood windows are designed to be repaired and, with proper care, can last for 100-200 years. The seals on vinyl windows often fail after 10-15 years, resulting in the need for full replacement windows have a much longer life.

Myth #4: Old windows are a lead hazard.

Truth: Old windows may have lead paint. Problems can arise if paint flakes off and the chips ingested, or when paint dust is inhaled. Keeping windowsills free of dust and old paint chips will reduce the hazard. A window restoration professional can remove excess paint from any friction points on the window, and lead paint can also be encapsulated.



Myth #5: It is better to replace than restore.

Truth: The cost to buy and install new windows is comparable to restoring the old one. However, the newly restored wood window will last much longer and preserve the historic integrity of the house.

Myth #6: Replacing your windows before selling a period or antique home will boost the value.

Truth: Most buyers of period or antique properties prefer the historic windows. Refrain from replacing the windows before selling, and work with a realtor who appreciates and is knowledgeable about historic properties.

Myth #7: New windows are green and have better energy ratings.

Truth: The greenest windows are the historic ones already in place, properly sealed and maintained. Millions of old windows that could have been repaired are discarded in landfills every year, and millions more vinyl and other newer windows also go to landfills. Regular maintenance by a homeowner or professional will prevent small problems from becoming big ones and extend the life of wooden windows into centuries. Keeping old windows is by far the best choice over the long haul!

Keeping your historic windows makes sense!



Historic preservation doesn't have to be a choice between what's good for the environment, what's cost-effective, and maintaining the historic integrity of your property.

Have additional questions? Let us know! We'd also love to see photos of your historic windows. Send questions and/or photos to: admin@nhpreservation.org.

Special thanks to Dave Bowers of Olde Window Restorers for providing the content on *Debunking Myths About Old Wood Windows*.

To learn more about Olde Window Restorers, visit their website: oldewindowrestorer.com

For additional resources about maintenance and restoring historic windows, visit the Window Preservation Alliance: windowpreservationalliance.com

To find a window professional in your area, please visit the NH Preservation Alliance Directory: nhpreservation.org/directory