

Installing Replacement Windows In An Old House

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Although exact totals vary, by most housing industry accounts, there are many millions of old homes in the United States. Some estimates suggest that as high as 15 percent of the country's housing inventory is homes over 70 years old! If you own a great old house, one of the typical issues you'll probably encounter during renovations is the need to replace some or all of your windows. But, replacing windows on an older home involves different considerations than a newer house. Let's look at those to help you with your determination of the best window solution for your old house:

What Happens When Old Windows No Longer Work?

Windows on *all* homes, new or old, take the brunt of wear and tear in protecting the home's interior from the outside elements while allowing enough outside light and air to flow in as desired. When old windows have exceeded their lifespan, they're often the cause of big drafts, water leaks, excessive dust, and wasted energy for heating and cooling. When those problems begin, should you try to restore or replace your windows? If you choose to replace your windows, what do you need to know about the very different options for doing that?

New Replacement Windows Vs. Improving Old Windows

Installing new replacement windows for your old home can cut energy bills, eliminate drafts, increase comfort, and shrink your carbon footprint more than any other change you can make to your home. However, there are special considerations in an older home. The cost to replace windows is relatively high, and there's the effect on the home's integrity as a historical property.

Knocking out parts of your home's walls just to fit new windows means eliminating more pieces of your home's original construction and historical integrity. If you want to avoid doing that, you can choose to install new custom replacement windows that are designed to fit in each window's existing opening, or you might consider one of the several options below for leaving the windows in place:

Window Options for Preserving a Historic Home:

You might decide that the priority should be to keep your windows as essential features of your home's identity as a historic structure. If so, you may prefer one of these three alternatives to replacing the old windows:

Restoring Old Windows

Some old homes still have good wood frames in the windows and may be worth reconstructing to preserve the integrity of a historic house. But, over the decades, wood windows in very old houses become misshapen due to weather exposure, natural aging, and deferred maintenance. They become drafty and leaky, and they may not function properly when opening or closing them. Having the work done to restore the windows may or may not be worth the hefty price of such restoration.

Retrofitting Existing Windows

Window installation contractors who specialize in retrofitting can insert new glass into the existing window frames and leave the sashes and frames intact. If the condition of the wood in the frames is good and the windows function well, then, with good maintenance going forward, you may be able to use the old windows for more years to come. Stripping and refinishing the frames, if needed, along with adding the new glass, can save the existing windows and save money.

Adding Storm Windows to Existing Windows

Adding storm windows to cover your old windows can help preserve them, help seal the drafts, and serve as an extra layer of protection for your home's interior from outside elements. You can use storm windows with a low-E coating to help minimize the heat entering your home from sunlight hitting the glass. Storm window installation services may not deliver ideally on aesthetics, but they can help reduce your heating and cooling costs, noise, and dust. Since little construction is needed, the expense is relatively low.

Replace Your Old House Windows with New Windows

If you determine that it is not practical to restore your old windows or cover them with storm windows, you may want to replace the windows instead of trying to make the old windows work. These are the two popular options for replacing your existing windows:

Replacing Old Windows with Standard Windows

Often, window frames in old houses do not match today's standard sizes, so replacing your old windows with stock windows causes multiple issues:

- It leaves big gaps, which means big drafts, which negates the point of new windows.
- It also may require an unnecessarily high construction expense.
- If you have new stock windows installed in old frames, you will have mismatches in the windows that do not function ideally and do not look like well-fitting windows.
- Replacing original windows on an old home with off-the-shelf new windows can cause a significant loss of property value in an historical home.

Replacing Old Windows with Custom Replacement Windows

All of the above concerns are avoided by choosing custom replacement windows as your solution. Customized windows are made to fit perfectly into your existing frame. So, there's no need to demolish parts of your walls around the window openings. Your new custom replacement window installations will not allow any gaps or leaks, because they're precisely the same size as the existing openings for your old windows.

Best Replacement Windows to Preserve Your Old Home

So, various options exist for repairing, restoring, or replacing your existing windows in your older home. Naturally, you want to preserve your home's vintage appeal, but you also want comfort and need energy efficiency. So, if your old windows are in good enough condition and they're worth restoring, that may be a good choice to preserve historical value. But, of the options described above, installing replacement windows in old house walls — in the original style in the existing openings — usually offers the most practical choice in terms of function, aesthetic beauty, durability, energy efficiency, and general home resale value, and renovation cost.

Custom Replacement Windows from Energy Shield

Energy Shield design and replacement window installation services experts can help you determine the best solution for upgrading the windows in your old house. We understand your priority interest in protecting the integrity of an old historic home and your need to reconcile that with windows that function properly, reasonable energy efficiency, and improved comfort.

Energy Shield window solutions experts can help you find your best options for custom replacement windows and installation that stay on budget and best preserve the beauty of your old home.

For guidance on installing replacement windows in your home, call Energy Shield Window & Door Company at (623) 349-7120, or contact us on our website!
