For the Love of Historic Windows

Challenges and Solutions

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Considering Window Replacement

• How much do we care about these particular windows?

• Can the goals of the project be achieved without replacement?

• If replacement is merited, will the new windows be appropriate?
How much do we care about these particular windows?
Is the building a contributing element of the historic district?

If “YES,” we care about the impact of the project on the subject building as well as the historic district in general.

If “NO,” we care about the impact of the project on the historic district.
Is the building 50 years old or older?

It’s 2016, so any building built in or before 1966 is 50 years old.

If the historic district has a defined Period of Significance, does it date to the POS?
YES (Built in 1930s from recycled materials)
Does the building retain sufficient integrity to reflect its period of significance?

For starters, check the historic district inventory.

And/or use your best judgement. Would someone visiting from that period recognize it?
Does the building retain sufficient integrity to reflect its period of significance?

Key factors are size/massing and fenestration. Have major additions been made? Have openings been altered in a manner that is not easily reversible?

Materials can be important, but are generally less so than additions and changes to the pattern of fenestration.
Are there contributing buildings in the immediate vicinity of the building?

Our job is to protect the historic district. If we’re in a pocket with no contributing resources, windows on an individual building are less important. But if contributing buildings are nearby, we need to consider carefully the impact that this project may have on them.
Are the existing windows original?

If the windows have already been replaced and are no longer historic, we are less concerned about the details of what replaces them (as it pertains to the building itself).

If the existing replacements are out of character for the period of the building and replacement is approved, it may be appropriate to revert to a period-appropriate configuration.
They call them “replacement” windows for a reason...

Because of the way they are constructed and the quality of materials used, replacement windows are prone to failure.

It is not unlikely that many of the windows you will be reviewing are existing replacement windows that cannot be repaired and must be re-replaced.
Are there any notable features about the window opening or frame?

Anything notable about the window sash?
YES. Varied configurations including multi-pane over one and semi-circular fan.
YES. 2/2 arched sash with arched openings and wood shutters.
YES. Multi-pane steel casements with stone sills and lintels.
YES  
(1/1 wood, some modern exterior storms)
NO (replacement 1/1)
NO (replacement 6/6; modern shutters)
NO – (but at least they’re true divided lites, not white & retained historic shutters)
Are the windows under consideration visible from the public right of way?

If not, you’re really not reviewing them.

Primary vs. secondary elevations
How much do we care about these particular windows?
Can the goals of the project be achieved without replacement?
Can this window be repaired?
Damaged Glazing
Failing Paint
Severely deteriorated Side Rail, Bottom Rail and Sill
Damaged Muntin
Broken Sash Chords
YES!
“Can the window(s) be repaired?”

This might not be the most relevant question. The answer is almost always YES. It is technically feasible to repair just about any historic window.

A better question (or series of ??s) might be:
• What is the applicant/owner trying to do?
• Is that a reasonable request?
• Can that be accomplished without replacement?
What are the goals of the proposed project?

Require applicants to articulate why it is that they want to replace their windows.

In many cases, repairs or modifications to the existing windows can address these issues (often at lower cost than replacement) while maintaining the integrity of the property and historic district.
Per Google: reasons to replace your old windows

• Energy Efficiency
• Safety
• Aesthetics
• Comfort & Convenience

These are the claims window manufacturers are using to sell replacement windows
Energy Efficiency

- Rebates from government
- Lower utility bills
- Environmentally friendly
- Single-pane glass
- Heat-reflecting low-E coatings & argon gas

These are the claims window manufacturers are using to sell replacement windows
Safety

• Cracked & broken glass are dangerous
• Lead paint
• Mold
• Operability (egress)

These are the claims window manufacturers are using to sell replacement windows
Aesthetics

• Get rid of storm windows
• Add curb appeal

“Windows instantly perk up the aesthetics of your house.”

These are the claims window manufacturers are using to sell replacement windows
Comfort & Convenience

• Reduce noise (by sealing gaps and installing double-pane glass)
• More natural light
• Easier cleaning (tilt-in sash)
• UV glass to protect belongings
• Insect screens
• Reduce future maintenance

These are the claims window manufacturers are using to sell replacement windows
Maintenance Free = Disposable

“Over time, your windows need to be replaced, just like your appliances or roof shingles. If your home’s windows are older than 15 years, ... it might be time to replace them.”

This may be true of modern windows, but it is not (rarely) true of historic windows, which must be maintained but can be repaired.

These are the claims window manufacturers are using to sell replacement windows
What are the goals of the proposed project?

- Improve appearance
- Make windows operable
- Make windows easier to clean
- Improve weatherization / energy efficiency
- Address damage from deferred maintenance
- Reduce future maintenance requirements
Has routine maintenance been conducted?

- Cleaning (Inspecting)
- Painting
- Replacing broken glass
Cleaning (and Inspection)

Windows that are cleaned regularly tend to be in better condition.

This is likely because any damage is identified early, and minor repairs can be made before they escalate.
Painting

Periodic painting is routine maintenance.

Many consider 7 years to be average lifespan for paint, but paint can last for 15 years or longer.

Surface preparation is the most important factor in the life expectancy of a paint finish.
How to paint a historic window

Preservation Brief 9: The Repair of Historic Wood Windows
https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/9-wooden-windows.htm

How To: Paint a Wood Window Sash

Proper preparation is key. Use oil base primer on prepared wood followed by two coats of high-quality paint.
Replacing Broken Glass

Historic windows with broken glass can be repaired and do not merit replacement.
Can minor repairs improve the condition of the windows to help achieve the project goal(s)?

- Reglazing
- Making windows operable
- Making windows easier to clean
Reglazing

Windows whose glazing is failing can generally be repaired and do not merit replacement.

Re-glazing is considered to be routine maintenance.
How NOT to reglaze a window
How to reglaze a historic window

Repairing Old Wood Windows: Glazing & Painting
http://www.hereandthere.org/oldhouse/windows-glazing-steps.html

Restoring a Historic Double-Hung Window Sash
http://renovateqc.org/node/189
Making Windows Operable

Windows that do not operate properly can generally be repaired and do not merit replacement.

Identify the problem or reason and address it.
Unsticking Over-Painted Windows

Windows that are painted shut can be repaired and do not merit replacement.

Carefully run a knife around the painted seams to unstick.
Replacing Sash Chords

Windows whose sash chords are broken or painted stiff can be repaired and do not merit replacement.

Replacing sash chords is considered to be a minor repair.

http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/how-to-repair-or-replace-window-sash-cords.pageCd-storyboard,pageNum-14.html#slideshow
Repairing or Replacing Pulleys

Rusted pulleys may keep windows from operating properly, but can be repaired or replaced, and do not require replacement of the whole window.
Double Hung vs. Single Hung

In double hung windows, both the upper and lower sash are operable. By opening both sash, cool air is drawn in the bottom while warm air flows out the top.

In single hung windows, only the bottom sash moves.
Modifications for Window Cleaning

Modern windows tilt in for easy cleaning.

Historic windows on sash chords or chains can be made to swing in for cleaning by simply removing the stop. If it is screwed in rather than nailed, it can easily be removed and replaced without damaging the window.
Are significant repairs or modifications necessary to achieve the project goal(s)?

- Epoxy Repairs
- Dutchman Repairs
- Parts Replacement
- Weather Stripping / Air Sealing
- Window Films / Storm Windows
- Lead Abatement
Epoxy Repairs

Sometimes window elements are severely deteriorated, but can be repaired in place with epoxy.

Epoxy repairs are relatively difficult, and are best done by a qualified professional. But they can be done, and should be considered.
Dutchman Repairs

When parts of window components require repair, joinery techniques known as “dutchman” repairs can often be utilized.
Part(s) Replacement
(Sill, Rail, Muntin, etc.)
Parts Replacement: Muntin
Parts Replacement: Rail
Parts Replacement: Sill
Sash Replacement - Custom

Sash replacement should be considered when window frames are in good condition, but sash and hardware need to be replaced.

Local contractors can produce custom sash to match others in the building.
Sash Replacement - Manufactured

Manufacturers also produce replacement sash. Typically, jamb liners are installed, compression fit to the sash – so that they have the functional advantages of new windows, but retain much of the existing materials.

**Advantages:**
- Reversible – the opening is not changed, so the new windows can simply be removed with very little damage to the window.
- Retains the existing frame, trim, etc.

**Disadvantages:**
- Loss of original sash and historic weight operation
Glass Replacement

When window glass is a key concern, historic single-glazing can sometimes be replaced with double-glazing in existing window sash. This generally requires non-reversible modification of the sash, but may be an appropriate solution.


FOUR EASY STEPS TO ENERGY EFFICIENT WOOD WINDOWS

1. Original window sashes are removed from the frame by a specialist and taken to our workshop.
2. Window putty & glass are removed from the sash and Low-E, insulated, double paned glass is then installed using glazing tape, caulking and custom stops.
3. Existing ropes & weights are re-balanced (or new hidden balances are installed), the window opening is weather stripped and insulated to eliminate drafts and noise.
4. Finished, weather-tight sash is re-installed in your home, ready for painting.
Glass Replacement

Note than when glass is replaced, the weight of the sash will change. In order to maintain the operability of the window, the weights will have to be adjusted accordingly.
Weather Stripping

Copper
Rubber (Sweep and/or Bulb)
Weather Stripping
Air Sealing

Windows are only one of many sources of air infiltration in any house. But sealing joints around windows frames will help to reduce the amount of air infiltration.

Removing window air conditioning units and closing windows is an easy way to significantly improve the function and efficiency of your windows.
Are there any easy, low-cost ways to make my home's original windows more energy efficient?

Of course there are! Making the windows of your older or historic home more energy efficient does not have to break the bank. Here are four easy tips to get you started:

1. Caulk around the window opening on the exterior.
2. Caulk around the window trim on the inside.
3. Add weather stripping to the window sash. There are many types of weather stripping to suit various window types, budgets, and needs.
4. Use a storm window or thermal panel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Windows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommended</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining windows on a regular basis to ensure that they function properly and are completely operable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retaining and repairing historic windows when deteriorated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weather stripping and caulking historic windows, when appropriate, to make them weather tight.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Installing interior or exterior storm windows or panels that are compatible with existing historic windows.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Windows

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended</th>
<th>Not Recommended</th>
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<tr>
<td>Installing compatible and energy-efficient replacement windows that match the appearance, size, design, proportion and profile of the existing historic windows and that are also durable, repairable and recyclable, when existing windows are too deteriorated to repair.</td>
<td>Installing incompatible or inefficient replacement window units that are not durable, recyclable or repairable when existing windows are deteriorated beyond repair or missing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacing missing windows with new, energy-efficient windows that are appropriate to the style of historic building and that are also durable, repairable and recyclable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retrofitting historic windows with high-performance glazing or clear film, when possible, and only if the historic character can be maintained.</td>
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## Windows

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<tr>
<td>Retrofitting historic steel windows and curtain-wall systems to improve</td>
<td>Retrofitting historically-clear windows with tinted glass or reflective coatings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thermal performance without compromising their character.</td>
<td>that will negatively impact the historic character of the building.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Installing clear, low-emissivity (low-e) glass or film without noticeable</td>
<td>Introducing clear glazing or a significantly lighter colored film or tint than</td>
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<tr>
<td>color in historically-clear windows to reduce solar heat gain.</td>
<td>the original when replacing historically-dark-tinted windows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installing film in a slightly lighter shade of the same color tint when</td>
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<tr>
<td>replacing glazing panels on historically-dark-tinted windows to improve</td>
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<tr>
<td>daylighting.</td>
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## Windows

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<th>Not Recommended</th>
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<tr>
<td>Maintaining existing, reinstalling or installing new, historically-appropriate shutters and awnings.</td>
<td>Removing historic shutters and awnings or installing inappropriate ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairing or reopening historically-operable interior transoms, when possible, to improve air flow and cross ventilation.</td>
<td>Covering or removing existing transoms.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Window Films

Some energy savings can be obtained by the addition of low-e film on the glass of either historic window sash or storm windows. This film reflects heat back into the building in the winter and back outside in the summer.

The NPS recommends installing clear, low-e glass or file without noticeable color, but does NOT recommend retrofitting historically clear windows with tinted glass or reflective coatings.

Far greater savings comes from having “secondary glazing,” like that provided by storm windows.
Storm Windows

Storm windows allow historic windows to perform as well, if not better, than modern replacements.

They allow the original windows to remain while reducing both conduction and infiltration.

When considering storm windows, you may want to take into consideration how the building will be seen by people. (ie/ Park Place, Williamsport)
Storm Windows - Wood

Historic looking wood storm windows can be purchased commercially or custom made.

Different types are available:
• Hinged
• Full Removal
• Partial Removal
Storm Windows – Exterior Aluminum

• Energy Savings
• Sound Reduction
• UV Reduction
• Sash Protection
• Reduced Heat Gain
• Reduced Condensation

Different types are available:
• Self-storing (Triple-track)
• Inside removal
• Outside removal
Storm Windows – Exterior

Aid in energy conservation, which results in reduction of heating and cooling costs.

Industry guidelines indicate that the addition of a storm window to an existing single-glazed window will reduce the energy loss through the window area by approximately 50%. This savings applies to both heating and cooling.
Storm Windows - Aluminum

While some manufacturers make only standard size rectangles, other companies produce custom aluminum storm windows.

Curved and arched tops, curved glass, etc.
Storm Windows - Interior

Interior storm window inserts help with thermal efficiency and reduce condensation on the historic windows, but do not protect their exteriors from the elements. They are less visible from the exterior, but may also be less durable.
Lead Abatement

Many people have safety concerns related to lead paint on historic windows.

Replacement is not required to address these concerns.

Appropriate Methods for Reducing Lead-Paint Hazards in Historic Housing

https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/37-lead-paint-hazards.htm
Lead Abatement

Paint in good condition and encapsulated is not a significant health risk.

Paint removal (to wood) can address the problem for good.
Finding a Window Contractor

Keep a list of qualified local contractors

Window Preservation Alliance
http://www.windowpreservationalliance.org/directory

The Preservation Marketplace
# Finding a Window Contractor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Street Address</th>
<th>City, State, Zip</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bobbie Jean Owens - Window Restoration &amp; Repair</strong>&lt;br&gt;Bobbie Owens</td>
<td>30 South Market Street&lt;br&gt;Selinsgrove&lt;br&gt;Pennsylvania&lt;br&gt;17870</td>
<td>under development....Soon!&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:bobbiejeanowens@yahoo.com">bobbiejeanowens@yahoo.com</a>&lt;br&gt;570-637-0098</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building Preservation Services, LLC</strong>&lt;br&gt;John Lindtner</td>
<td>128 Myrtle Avenue&lt;br&gt;West Grove&lt;br&gt;Pennsylvania&lt;br&gt;19390</td>
<td><a href="http://www.buildingpreservationservices.com">www.buildingpreservationservices.com</a>&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:buildingpreservationservices@gmail.com">buildingpreservationservices@gmail.com</a>&lt;br&gt;302-983-4056</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Iconic Windows</strong>&lt;br&gt;Adam Butler</td>
<td>3624 Darby Rd.&lt;br&gt;Bryn Mawr&lt;br&gt;Pennsylvania&lt;br&gt;19010</td>
<td><a href="http://www.iconicwindows.com">www.iconicwindows.com</a>&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:adam@iconicwindows.com">adam@iconicwindows.com</a>&lt;br&gt;6107333239</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Redhouse Renovation</strong>&lt;br&gt;Nick Anderson</td>
<td>PO Box 281&lt;br&gt;Lancaster&lt;br&gt;Pennsylvania&lt;br&gt;17543</td>
<td><a href="http://www.keepyourwoodwindows.com">www.keepyourwoodwindows.com</a>&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:service@redhouserenovations.com">service@redhouserenovations.com</a>&lt;br&gt;717-626-8873</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structural Restoration Services, Inc.</strong>&lt;br&gt;Daniel Warner</td>
<td>PO Box 485&lt;br&gt;Loganville&lt;br&gt;Pennsylvania&lt;br&gt;17342</td>
<td><a href="http://www.restore-it.com">www.restore-it.com</a>&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:dew@restore-it.com">dew@restore-it.com</a>&lt;br&gt;800-775-1004</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
In order to achieve the goal(s) of the project, do all windows need to be repaired, modified or replaced, or just one/some?
What % of windows for wholesale window replacement?

Use window inventory
Most problems can be solved by repairing or modifying historic windows to suit current needs. But in some instances, replacement may be warranted.
Can the goals of the project be achieved without replacement?
If replacement is merited, will the new windows be appropriate?
Does the proposed window project maintain all of the essential characteristics of the existing windows?

Negotiable vs. Non-Negotiable
Size

The new window should fill the entire existing window opening.

Non-Negotiable?
The replacement window MUST fit the existing window opening.
Shape

The new window should be the same shape as the historic window. Arches and other shapes should be duplicated in the new sash.

Non-Negotiable? The replacement window MUST fit the existing window opening.
The new window should operate in the same manner as the historic window. Or should at least have the appearance of operating like the historic window did.

Single hung, double hung, casement, etc.

Negotiable?
Pane Configuration

The configuration of lites or panes should match the historic windows.

9/12, 6/6, 2/2, 1/1, etc.

Negotiable?
The window sash must contain true divided lites.
Non-Negotiable?
Window trim may not be wrapped in aluminum or other cladding
Materials

Whenever possible, the new window should be made of the same material as the historic window.

Regardless of material, if the other (non-negotiable) window characteristics are not matched, the window is not appropriate.
If replacement is required, has the applicant considered in kind replacement options?
New windows from old growth wood
Custom new windows from new wood

Old growth lumber tends to be more durable than new wood.

However, there are several varieties of wood, such as mahogany and other imports, that can be suitable for window sash and frames.
Manufactured new wood windows
If replacement in kind is not a feasible option, has the applicant considered replacement alternatives using synthetic materials?
Aluminum Clad Wood
Aluminum clad wood windows can be very high in quality (and cost).

However, they use new wood, which can deteriorate unseen behind the cladding.

Although their appearance remains good, they do not outlast new wood windows.
Vinyl Clad Wood

Vinyl clad wood windows have thinner profiles than vinyl windows.

They use new wood, which can deteriorate unseen behind the cladding.
The problem with cladding

Clad windows have lots of seams. If (when) those seams fail, water will get in behind the cladding and rot the wood. The deterioration will not be visible, so cannot be repaired.
The problem with cladding
Fiberglass

Fiberglass is strong, so fiberglass windows typically have thinner profiles than vinyl windows.

They may also be more durable.
Vinyl is not inherently strong, so profiles tend to be bulky. This can result in a loss of daylight opening, which changes the proportions of the building elevation.

Vinyl is not readily paintable, so its color is permanent.
Will the proposed project be completed in a manner that is reversible and will not damage the building?
Insert Windows

Intended for use when the existing window frame is in good condition: “If your current window frame is in good condition, there’s no need to remove it. Exterior casing and interior trim remain undisturbed by the replacement process. Both sash effortlessly tilt in or can be removed for easy cleaning. Many divided-lite options are available.”

**Advantages:**
• Reversible – the opening is not changed, so the new windows can simply be removed with very little damage to the window.
• Allows for improved energy efficiency – weights can be removed and weight pockets insulated (however, this is not reversible unless done properly)

**Disadvantages:**
• Reduction of daylight opening – because the new window frame is inside the existing frame, the glass area is reduced in size.
Full-Frame Replacement

Intended for use when the entire window - including the sash, frame and casing - have deteriorated.

**Advantage:** retains entire daylight opening

**Disadvantage:** results in loss of more historic materials, including frame and casing, as well as all trim and brick mould.
Not reversible.
Installation: It’s all in the details!

“When the window replacement goes bad, the hapless customer is often faced with a three-way finger pointing exercise where the window supplier, the window manufacturer and the window installer each blame one another for the bad window replacement. The customer spent good money for windows and got bullshit instead.”

-Mark Meshulam, Chicago Window Expert
Bad Window Replacement: Top 10 Installer Screw-ups

#1. Not tying to the Tyvek!
The incorrect open space between the window and the WRB provides a wide-open passageway for air and water to enter the building.

#2. No damned end dam!
They need to have something at the end that prevents the water from running out and into the wall cavity. The water should drain, or weep to the front only.

#3. Shi**y shimming!
Shims are necessary to maintain proper window shape and thus performance.
Bad Window Replacement: Top 10 Installer Screw-ups

#4. Crappy caulking: Cleaning!
Caulk is a fundamental part of window installation. It is the stuff that maintains water and air tightness. In order to work, it must stick.

#5. Crappy caulking: No tooling!
When a caulk joint is not tooled, the joint is bumpy and uneven. Its life expectancy is reduced.

#6. Crappy caulking: Joints too tight!
Caulk is supposed to be a permanently flexible material that can stretch and contract when the substrates move. But it can only expand and contract a fraction of the joint depth. If a caulk joint is not big enough, the caulk will fail and water will enter the building.
Top 10 Installer Screw-ups

#7. Not sealing the trim!
Clad wood windows often have an “accessory groove” around their edges that receives some sort of trim or mullion connector. It is a pandemic that these seem to rarely be sealed to the window.

#8. Not sealing mullions!
Unsealed mullions then drip water into the wall and damage wood, drywall and other finishes.

#9. No second line of defense
The first line of defense will usually be the exterior caulk and any sealant covering fastener heads in the “wet area”. It doesn’t last forever. Where will the water go when these things fail? Include a second line of defense.

#10. Final Quality Check!
Top 10 Installer Screw-ups

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#10. Final Quality Check!

A window replacement project is only as good as its installer.
The limiting factor in the life of a replacement window is usually its caulk.
If replacement is merited, will the new windows be appropriate?
Considering Window Replacement

How much do we care about these particular windows?

- Is the building historic?
- Are the windows historic?
Considering Window Replacement

Can the goals of the project be achieved without replacement?

- What are the project goals?
- Can the existing windows be repaired or modified to achieve those goals?
Considering Window Replacement

If replacement is merited, will the new windows be appropriate?

• Are they the right size and shape?
• Do they match or mimic the window type and configuration?
• Is the material a good choice?
• Will they be installed in a manner that preserves the remaining historic building fabric?
Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced.

Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials.
There is a lot of questionable and even incorrect information out there. Many people simply don’t know the best way to achieve their short and long term goals. It is your job to help them think things through thoroughly, and make sure they are making a responsible decision.
Resources

- National Park Service
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Preservation Pennsylvania
- PA Historic Communities Network
- Google
- YouTube