

Porches have been called "our window on the world." They are the transition between private indoor space and the outdoors, and introduce the house to passersby. They provide a protected outdoor room that allows for interaction with neighbors. Even in the age of television and indoor activities, Columbia's front porches continue to be used for socializing.

Porches can help save energy, as they shade the house in summer and protect the entry from winter weather. Porches provide a cool place to sit when it is hot, and a dry place when it is raining.

Front porches (as well as rear porches and upper balconies) are important to a building's architectural design and style. Many buildings were designed specifically to include a porch, for both function and aesthetics. Because porches help to balance the overall mass of a building, their removal or alteration detracts from a building's appearance and disturbs its size and scale.

Porches are not maintenance-free, but the beauty and utility they add to a house make their maintenance a good investment. Because a porch is open to the elements, it may decay faster than other house parts.

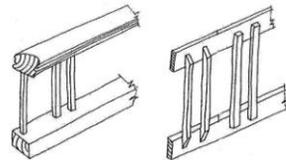
Porch Design

Most porches consist of wooden elements, including the roof, floorboards, columns and railings. (Porches might also feature brick or stone foundations.) Wood elements should not be replaced with brick, wrought iron, or concrete blocks. If components are replaced, match the design and materials of the original feature.

A front porch should not be demolished since it is an important architectural feature on a house. Adding a new porch to a house's façade, if one never existed, will also alter the building's character. Consider any porch additions at the rear.

Front porches should not be enclosed. Besides changing the building's character, enclosure may not conform with zoning or fire regulations.

Much of a porch's character is derived from its wood railings. Traditional railings are made up of horizontal top and bottom rails, and vertical balusters set within the rails (not mounted on the side like a deck).



YES

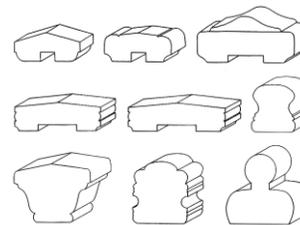
NO

Porch Repair

Wood porch elements should be painted regularly, which will help to protect the wood from undue weathering.

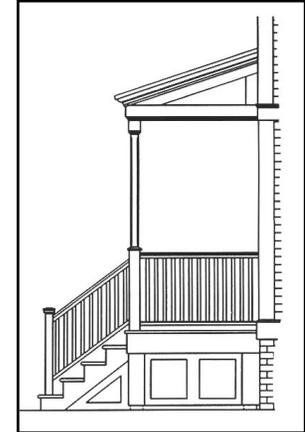
When balusters are missing or cannot be repaired, consider having new pieces made by local millwork shops to match the originals. This is usually cheaper and produces better results than replacing everything with generic new materials. Lightweight wrought-iron railings are not appropriate replacements for wood features.

When installing a new handrail or railing, select a simple design. The top and bottom rails should slope to repel water and prevent rot. Top rails with a curved or rounded shape provide a surface that a hand can grasp for safety, will shed water, and add an interesting detail to a front porch.



TOP RAILS

Keep porch roofs in good repair to avoid deterioration of the underlying wood structure.



To keep a porch in good condition, follow a few simple guidelines:

Inspect elements seasonally to catch signs of deterioration early and keep repair costs low.

Repair porch elements rather than replacing them.

Paint wooden elements, and maintain brick or stone foundations, to avoid moisture damage.

Caring for

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Caring for Wood Windows

Caring for Bricks

Painting Old Buildings

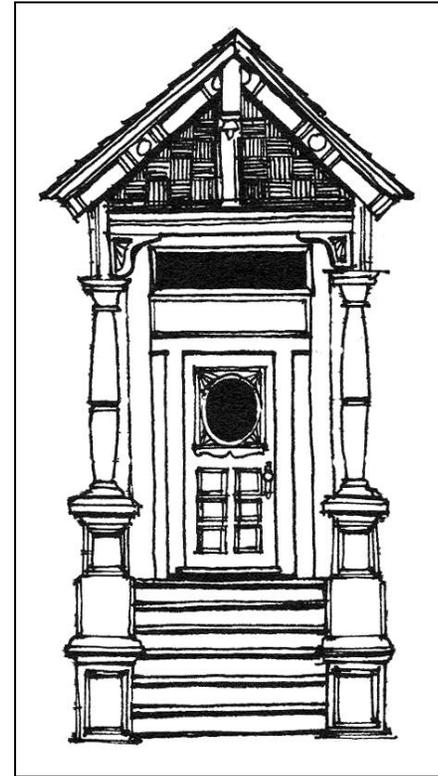
Maintenance Is Preservation: Maintenance Checklist for Older Buildings

Historical Architectural Review Board

Borough of Columbia

309 Locust Street

Columbia, PA 17512



PORCHES

BOROUGH of COLUMBIA

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Columbia, Pennsylvania 17512