



GUIDELINES FOR ROOFING



Town of Riverhead Landmarks Preservation Commission

GUIDELINES FOR ROOFING



This represents one of the few commercial buildings on Main Street with a highly decorative roof treatment. This Mansard roof is covered with three colors of fish scale slate installed in a decorative pattern and trimmed along its edges with painted metal flashing. A series of steeply pitched gable roof dormers with projecting eaves provide additional habitable space at the upper level. Also note the projecting roof cornice with the paired decorative brackets, typical of the Victorian period.

These *Guidelines* were developed in conjunction with the Town of Riverhead's Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) and Architectural Review Board (ARB). Please review this information during the early stages of planning your project. Familiarity with this material can assist in moving a project quickly through the approval process, saving applicants both time and money.

The LPC and ARB encourage informal informational meetings with potential applicants who are considering a project that might include exterior changes to their properties. Please call the Building Department at (631) 727-3200 ext. 213.

Nothing in these *Guidelines* shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or repair with like materials of similar quality and color.

Additional *Guidelines* addressing other historic building topics are available at Town Hall and on its web site at www.riverheadli.com. For more information, to clarify whether a proposed project requires LPC review, or to obtain permit applications, please call the Building Department at (631) 727-3200 ext. 213.

PURPOSE

These *Guidelines* were prepared to assist property owners with information when considering the repair, alteration or installation of roofing. It is not intended that these *Guidelines* should replace consultation with qualified architects, contractors, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), Architectural Review Board (ARB) and applicable ordinances.



Residential buildings, particularly those from the Victorian period, tend to have very complex roof forms that can include intersecting gables, dormers and towers.

ROOFS

A building's roof provides the first line of defense against the elements and its design greatly affects the overall appearance of a building. Therefore, the following functional and aesthetic concerns should be considered when considering roof alteration.

- Weather-tight roofing preserves a building and provides shelter from rain, wind, sun and snow
- Temperature variation and building movement affect roofing materials
- Roofing helps define the building's character, silhouette and architectural style
- The form, color and texture of roof and roof penetrations affect the scale and massing of the building
- Roofing variations add visual interest to the streetscape

ROOF FORMS

There are six general roof forms. The roof forms can have various pitches and be combined in different manners to provide numerous roof types.

- **Gable Roofs** include front, side and cross-gable configurations. Gable roofs generally have two equally angled inclined planes that meet at a central ridge and represent one of the most common roof forms for their ability to shed water and relative ease of construction. Most vernacular or traditional buildings in the area use this roof form.

In the side gable configuration, the primary entrance is located below the sloping side eaves of the roof. In the front gable configuration, the main entrance is located at a gable end. A cross-gable roof refers to perpendicularly intersecting front and side gable forms, with the primary entrance at either the front or side gable.

- **Shed Roofs**, also known as a pent roofs or lean-tos, are roofs with a single slope, essentially forming a half gable, with rafters spanning between one exterior wall and a secondary wall. Shed roofs are typically used for additions to existing buildings.
- **Gambrel Roofs**, also known as Dutch roofs, include a pair of shallow pitched slopes above a pair of steeply pitched roofs on each side of a center ridge.
- **Hipped Roofs** slope inward from exterior walls, meeting at a ridge or a point, as in pyramidal roofs.
- **Mansard Roofs** include a steeply pitched lower slope beginning at the building cornice, and a nearly flat upper slope that might not be visible from the ground. The lower slope can be straight, concave or convex.
- **Flat Roofs** might be a true horizontal plane or have a low pitch to allow for drainage. Flat roofs often terminate at a parapet, generally an extension of the building's exterior walls.



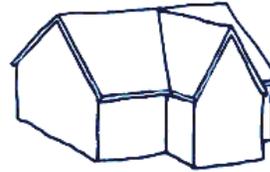
This commercial building has a decorative cornice at the front elevation, but a lower flat roof is evident at the side elevation.



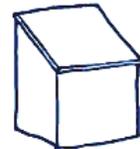
Front Gable



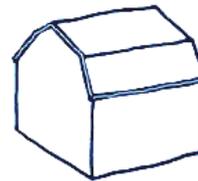
Side Gable



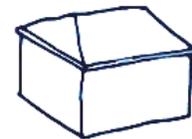
Cross Gable



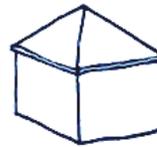
Shed



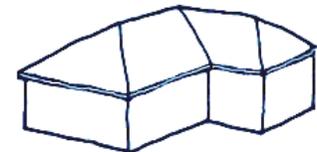
Gambrel



Ridged Hip



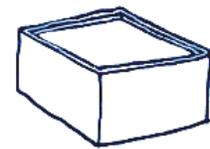
Pyramidal Hip



Cross Hipped



Mansard



Flat with Parapet

ROOF PITCH AND MATERIALS

The pitch or slope of a roof helps define the appropriate materials for the roof. Low-pitched to flat roofs depend on a continuous or nearly continuous roof surface to minimize moisture infiltration. Material options for low-pitched roofs include built-up hot tar roofing; roll roofing; and soldered flat seam metal. Possibilities for moderately to steeply sloped roofs include unit materials such as slate, wood shingles, metal shingles and asphalt shingles. With Riverhead's salt air, it is recommended that metal roofing that is less susceptible to corrosion, such as copper, be installed.

ROOFING MATERIALS

Historically, roofing materials were selected based upon practical and aesthetic criteria including pitch, weather conditions and availability of materials and craftsmen. Riverhead's salt air generally limited the use of metal roofing.

In the Town of Riverhead, historic roof materials were generally wood shingles, less frequently slate and later asphalt shingles. Each material provides a specific color, texture and pattern to a roof surface. Slate and wood shingles provide a modulated surface with variations in color, texture veining or graining and thickness. Decorative slate shingles were also used, particularly in the Victorian period during the second half of the nineteenth century, to add additional colors or shapes to roof surfaces.

With industrialization at the beginning of the twentieth century, new roofing materials were introduced, including asbestos and asphalt based shingles, as well as varieties of rolled or built-up roofing for flat installations. The variety of metal roofing was also expanded, including copper, galvanized sheet steel and aluminum. More recently, a larger variety of substitute roofing materials intended to simulate historic materials have been developed, with some being more successful than others. These include "dimensional" or "architectural" asphalt-composition shingles; fiberglass, metal or recycled rubber shingles intended to evoke the appearance of wood or slate shingles.

INVESTIGATING HISTORIC ROOFING

Some investigation is needed to determine the historic roof material for a building. A good place to start is in the attic. New roofs are often laid atop older roof surfaces. By looking between rafters, older roofs can sometimes be seen. Another area of review is the roof framing, lath and sheathing. Because of its weight, slate requires more substantial roof framing, tending towards larger rafters with narrower spacing than wood shingle framing. If the original lath is visible, there are variations in lath spacing that relate to standard sizes for slate and wood shingles. Finally, wood sheathing was often needed in metal roof installations, while lath was used in wood and slate shingle installations.

If physical evidence is not available, documentary evidence such as historic photographs, speaking to neighbors or looking at similar buildings in the area might provide clues about original roof materials.



Wood shingles are not as common as they were historically in Riverhead.

WOOD SHINGLES

Wood shingles are typically made from cedar, cypress, redwood, oak, elm or white pine. Historically they represented a common sloped roofing material in Riverhead.

A wood shingle roof can last 30 to 60 years depending on the roof pitch, quality of materials and installation. However, like all exterior wood installations, a shingle roof is subject to deterioration from rot, splitting, warping and eroding. In many cases, wood shingle roofs are replaced at the first indication of a localized problem when regular maintenance or a less intensive repair would be sufficient. Common locations of failure are the roof accessories including the fasteners, flashing and gutters, which might have a shorter life span than the roofing surface. To extend the serviceable life of a roof, property owners are encouraged to address localized problems as they become apparent.

Typical localized problems and possible repairs for wood shingles:

- Loosening or corrosion of fasteners for shingles or accessories – *Reattach or replace fastener*
- Split or punctured shingle – *Install sheet metal under shingle, fill split or hole with roofing cement*
- Moss or fungi on surface – *Trim back adjacent trees allowing sun to dry out roof surface; investigate fungicide application; check attic for adequate ventilation*
- Missing or damaged shingles or roof accessories – *Replace to match original*

If over 20% of the wood shingles on a roof slope are damaged or missing, replacement of the roofing might be warranted. Wood roofing replacement alternatives include dimensional fiberglass asphalt shingles.



This Victorian slate roof has multiple colors and patterns.

SLATE

Slate was a popular roofing material, providing a durable, fire resistant and attractive surface, and in certain conditions, capable of lasting for centuries. It was often used in Victorian architecture where the variety of shapes and colors for slates, including gray, black, red, green and purple, made the roof surface a visually important building feature, and later in Colonial Revival architecture, with simple square-cut grey slates.

A slate roof can last 60 to 125 years depending on the stone properties, formation, installation quality and regularity of maintenance. A failing slate often slowly delaminates, chips and absorbs moisture, causing the deterioration process to accelerate over time. Even more often than wood roofing, problems with slate roofs are typically the result of localized failure since many of the roof accessories and fasteners do not have the same 100-year life span as the slate itself. To extend the serviceable life of a roof, property owners are encouraged to address localized problems as they become apparent, using a qualified slate roofer.

Typical localized problems and possible repairs for slate:

- Loosening or corrosion of fasteners for slate or accessories – *Reattach or replace fastener*
- Split or cracked slate – *Install sheet metal under shingle, fill split or hole with roofing cement*
- Missing or damaged slates or roof accessories – *Replace to match original*

If over 20% of the slates on a roof slope are damaged or missing, replacement of the roofing might be warranted, although applicants are strongly encouraged to make every attempt to match decorative patterns and colors with replacement materials. Ceramic tile, rubber and other materials are used to simulate slate, but many have not been available commercially for very long. Dimensional or architectural fiberglass asphalt shingles are manufactured by several companies, simulating the shapes, color and variegated color appearance of slate.

METAL

Metal was popularized for roofing after sheet metal production was expanded following the Civil War, and can be found on primary buildings as well as agricultural structures and outbuildings. However Riverhead's salt air, and its propensity to cause corrosion, generally limited the use of metal roofing.

Traditional sheet roofing metals include lead, copper, zinc, tin plate, tern plate, and galvanized iron. Many metal roofs require painting with traditional colors including red, silver, green or black to minimize the potential for corrosion. On shallow pitch roofs like porches, cupolas or domes, small rectangular pieces of flat seam metal roofing were installed with edges crimped together and soldered to form a weather-tight surface. On steeper pitched roofs, tin shingle roofs were installed, typically necessitating regular repainting. Rarely, long continuous seams were used, either in a standing seam or batten seam configuration, providing regular ridges down roof slopes.

A well-installed and maintained metal roof is very durable and can last well over a century. If not properly installed, metal roofing is subject to expansion and contraction with changes in temperature, resulting in buckling and warping. Similar to slate roofing, metal roofing work should be undertaken by a specialist.

Deterioration of the metal surface tends to occur from wearing of the protective painted or galvanized surface, chemical action, rusting, pitting or streaking, airborne pollutants, rain or material acids, or galvanic action. Galvanic action occurs when dissimilar metals chemically react against each other and corrode, and can come from adjacent metals, such as fasteners and non-adjacent metals, such as roof cresting via rainwater.

Typical localized problems and possible repairs for metal:

- Worn paint, galvanizing or coating – *Repaint*
- Slipping sheet, open seam or solder joint – *Refasten and re-solder*
- Isolated rusting or holes – *Replace to match original*

If the roof is generally rusting, splitting, pitted, severely buckled or warped, or many of the seams or edges are open or disfigured, replacement of the roofing might be warranted, although applicants are encouraged to make every attempt to match seam patterns and color with the replacement material. Metal roofing replacement alternatives are generally either hand fabricated of copper or tin; or pre-manufactured of aluminum or steel, typically with a baked-on painted finish to minimize corrosion and potential deterioration.

ASPHALT

Asphalt became a popular roofing material at the beginning of the twentieth century providing a relatively inexpensive and easily installed roofing material. Early roofing was generally made of asphalt-saturated felts in a variety of shapes, styles, textures and colors. Today, asphalt shingles are made with fiberglass, generally as 3-tab or “architectural” or “dimensional” shingles, which include multiple layers of material with simulated shadows suggesting wood or slate.

An asphalt shingle roof can be expected to last from 15 to 25 years with “architectural” or “dimensional” shingles lasting longer due to their multiple layers. Over time, asphalt shingles can curl, lose their mineral coating, be dislodged by wind or ice, or become brittle.

Typical localized problems and possible repairs for asphalt:

- Split or puncture – *Install sheet metal under shingle, fill split or hole with roofing cement*
- Moss or fungi on surface – *Trim back adjacent trees allowing sun to dry out roof surface*
- Missing or damaged shingles or roof accessories – *Replace to match original*

If over 20% of the asphalt shingles on a roof slope are damaged or missing, replacement of the roofing might be warranted. Some historic styles and colors for asphalt shingles are still available. Property owners are encouraged to replace historic asphalt in-kind.



The asphalt shingle roof simulates the appearance of wood shingles. Also note the standing seam copper hood above the entrance door.



Most Main Street commercial buildings along have flat roofs.

FLAT ROOFING SYSTEMS

Although very few roofs are truly “flat”, low-sloped, generally defined as a pitch below 3:12 slope, (3 inch rise for 12 inch run), require a watertight roofing system. By contrast steeper pitched roof systems generally employ shingles; in materials such as slate, wood and asphalt; to shed stormwater. There are a variety of flat or low-slope roof systems including: metal roofing; built-up roofing; single-ply roofing, and modified bitumen roofing.

Typical localized problems for flat roofs include:

- Splits, punctures, or cracking of surface
- Standing water or poor drainage

In selecting the most appropriate roofing material it is important to verify the design will address the building’s drainage and special details of the exiting conditions including attachment, substrate and weight limitations. Other factors include maintenance requirements and anticipated life span in Riverhead’s climate and salt air.

ALTERNATE MATERIALS

When considering installing alternate roofing materials, it is important to balance installation costs, the roof’s design, long-term durability and aesthetics.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission encourages:

- Maintaining historic appearance of roofs when replacing, including size, shape, texture, pattern, color and other visual characteristics of original
- Installing roofing rather than typical wall materials on the steep slopes of Mansard roofs
- Installing a variegated or blended color of shingles
- Visiting a completed installation rather than relying on brochure photographs
- Verifying that proposed material is appropriate for roof pitch
- Understanding the substrate and attic ventilation appropriate for each material
- Understanding that some artificial materials might fade or change appearance over time

ROOF ACCESSORIES

In addition to the roofing surface, roof accessories are also functional and influence a roof's appearance. Roof accessories include flashing, gutters, downspouts and snow birds.

Flashing is made of thin sheet metal formed to prevent water from entering a building at joints, intersections and changes of pitch. It is typically installed around chimneys, parapet walls, dormer windows, roof valleys, vents and intersections of porches, additions or bow windows. Flashing often fails before roof surfaces, particularly with more durable roofing such as slate, resulting in interior leaking. If the flashing deteriorates, it is possible to replace it without replacing the entire roof.

When replacing flashing or installing a new roof, it is important to select a flashing material that has an anticipated life span similar or longer than the roofing. Copper, terne, steel, lead and aluminum are all used for flashing. The longevity of each material is based upon its thickness, its propensity for deterioration from the salt air and environmental conditions, and whether it is galvanized, treated or coated. Generally, copper or lead coated copper have the longest life span, followed by steel, with aluminum being highly susceptible to punctures, tears and a galvanic reaction to other metals and some roofing materials. It is important to verify flashing materials are sympathetic and compatible to existing roofing materials.

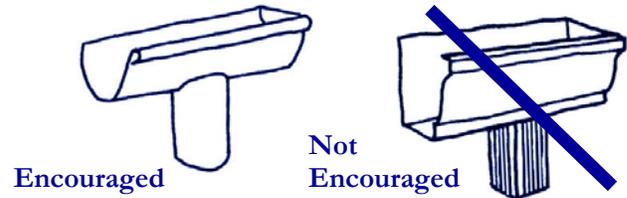


Stepped copper flashing is visible where the slate porch roof intersects the brick wall.

Gutters are typically located near or along the bottom edge of a roof slope to collect rainwater. Built-in gutters are hidden from view from the ground within or behind architectural features such as cornices or parapets. Pole gutters are located near the bottom edge of a roof slope and project perpendicularly to the roof surface. Both built-in gutters and pole gutters are formed of flashing materials typically wrapped around or within wood forms.

Hanging gutters are attached to the building just under the roof slope edge and are half-round or profiled in cross section. Hanging gutters have been made of wood, copper, galvanized metals, aluminum and recently vinyl.

Similar to flashings, gutter materials have different longevitys. Generally, copper has the longest potential life span, followed by steel, with aluminum being highly susceptible to punctures, tears, dents and galvanic reaction to other metals. Vinyl can become brittle, fracturing in low temperatures.



Half-round gutters with round or rectangular downspouts are preferred to decorative gutters with corrugated downspouts.

Downspouts, also known as rainwater conductors, are generally surface mounted to a building's exterior to conduct a gutter's water down the face of the building to the ground or an underground drainage system. Similar to gutters, downspouts can be fabricated of copper, galvanized metal, aluminum and vinyl with similar characteristics, in a round or rectangular profile.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission encourages:

- Installing flashing materials that have an anticipated life that is longer than the building's roofing
- Regular cleaning of gutters and downspouts
- Retaining original drainage system and appearance
- Installing half-round gutters rather than a profiled K-gutter, which often compete with building features
- Installing plain round or rectangular downspouts in lieu of corrugated downspouts

Snow birds, known as snow guards, are typically cast metal or bent wire devices arranged in a staggered pattern near an eave to prevent large masses of snow from sliding off a roof. Another form of a snow guard is spaced brackets supporting metal rods above the roof surface. Both types of snow retention can protect eaves, cornice and gutters, and take advantage of the insulating effect of snow.



Snow birds tend to be located near the roof eave.

ROOF FEATURES

Roof features are decorative and sometimes functional elements that help to define the profile of a roof against the skyline and should complement the building's style. Historic rooftop features include chimneys, dormers, cupolas, bell towers, turrets, finials, cresting and weathervanes.



Victorian era chimneys tend to include more decorative detailing such as the articulation of the verticality in the “piers” and the corbelling at the top. This example also includes terra cotta chimney pots. Also note the metal flashing at the base of the chimney, at location that is highly susceptible to moisture infiltration.

Chimneys were typically designed to complement the style of a building and period of construction. In Riverhead, many are constructed of brick more rarely stone, some of which have been covered with stucco. Most styles of building, including Colonial Revival and Classical Revival buildings, tend towards square or rectangular chimney shafts, sometimes with molded caps. Victorian period chimneys can include decorative detailing including corbelling, varied patterns, undulating and molded surfaces and decorative terra-cotta chimney pots.



Dormers can provide additional habitable space, particularly at gambrel and mansard roofs.

Dormers, also known as dormer windows, protrude from the roof surface with a window at the downward slope, providing light and additional headroom under roof eaves. Dormers can have various roof shapes including gables, shed, hipped, eyebrow, segmented pediment and other shapes.

Cupolas, also known as monitors or belvederes, are structures that project up from the roof, used for ventilation with louvers, or as lookouts with windows. They are often found on agricultural outbuildings to provide ventilation for the animals housed below, but can also be found in urban areas as a decorative feature on important residential, institutional or civic buildings.



Historically in Riverhead, cupolas can be found at some high-style Italianate residences. Also note the projecting bracketed cornice and shallow pitch roof, typical of the Italianate style.

When addressing roof features, it is important to remember they are part of the stylistic composition of the roof and building, and can be difficult and costly to replace.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission encourages:

- Maintaining and repairing of historic roof features
- Replacing damaged or missing materials with new to match the material, size, shape, texture, color and other visual characteristics of the original

SOLAR COLLECTORS

Roof-mounted solar collectors are a renewable energy source. The Town of Riverhead encourages solar panels for space heating, hot water and electricity. However in Historic Districts, property owners are encouraged to locate solar collectors, satellite dishes and antennas, in a location that is hidden from public view. This could mean the disguising solar collectors or placing them elsewhere, such as on the ground. The Landmarks Preservation Commission will be happy to work with property owners to find a functional and appropriate solar collector location.

ROOF REPAIR OR REPLACEMENT

The Landmarks Preservation Commission encourages:

- Maintaining, cleaning or repairing of roofing, roof accessories and rooftop features
- Regular repainting of metal components susceptible to rusting and wood elements susceptible to rot and deterioration
- Cleaning of gutters and downspouts regularly, typically every spring and fall
- Inspecting of attics periodically after a storm or freeze to catch small leaks early to minimize the potential for interior damage
- Selectively replacing damaged or missing materials with new materials to match the material, size, shape, texture, color and other visual characteristics of the original
- If the level of damage or deterioration is beyond repair, completely replacing damaged or missing materials with new materials to match the material, size, shape, texture, pattern, color and other visual characteristics of the original
- If replacement in original material is not possible, replacing the damaged or missing materials with new material of similar size, shape, texture, pattern, color and other visual characteristics of the original
- Securely installing fasteners and flashings with a similar expected life span to the roofing material
- Installing roofing rather than typical wall materials on the steep slopes of Mansard roofs

The Landmarks Preservation Commission discourages:

- Removal of roof features such as chimneys, dormers, cupolas, weathervanes, finials, etc.
- Removing or altering historic drainage system
- Adding or altering rooftop features at areas visible from a public way that change roof configuration including skylights, television antennas or dishes, solar collectors, mechanical equipment, roof decks, chimney stacks and dormer windows
- Adding rooftop features that create a false historical sense without supporting documentary evidence such as weathervanes, cupolas or wood shingles on an originally slate roof
- Adding new features that are out of character, scale, materials or detailing to the historic building
- Encapsulating decorative wood elements such as cornices and brackets with vinyl or aluminum capping or siding



The shingles provide a unique pattern on the roof surface.

ADDITIONAL AREAS OF CONSIDERATION

- Roofing work is potentially dangerous and should be left to professionals
- All roofers are not experienced in all materials, obtain references and verify that roofers have appropriately completed compatible work
- Verify the extent of both the material and installation warranties and company histories
- Verify whether removal of existing roofing is required before installation of new roofing; too much weight can damage structural elements
- Verify the condition of substrate for rot or decay and make necessary repairs, including the sheathing or lath, and structural elements
- Use substrate appropriate for roof material and provide adequate ventilation under roof surface
- Use appropriate underlayment including building paper, rosin paper and/or ice shield
- Use appropriate fasteners for Riverhead's high winds
- Use a single type of metal compatible to roofing at fasteners, flashing, gutters and downspouts to avoid galvanic action
- Select a flashing material with a longer or comparable life span to the roofing material
- Reference industry standards such as SMACNA, Copper and Common Sense, Slate, etc. – The Landmarks Preservation Commission can suggest project specific references



Funding for the Town of Riverhead Historic Guidelines and Bulk Study was provided by a 2005 award from the Quality Communities Grant Program, which is administered by the New York Department of State, Office of Coastal, Local Government, and Community Sustainability.

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