

## EXTERIOR COLOR AND PAINT

### The Least You Need to Know:

- Paint Color is NOT regulated by HARB
- Proper surface preparation will extend the life of paint on your building
- If you “power wash” your wood prior to painting, you must allow the wood to fully dry before applying paint. This could take several weeks or longer.
- The color of more permanent materials such as roof shingles is reviewed by HARB.

### Introduction

Perhaps no other historic district issue is more controversial than that of COLOR. Color preference is a personal matter, and most property owners don't want to be told what color to paint their homes.

In Mercersburg, approvals are usually **NOT** required for the selection of paint color because paint color is not permanent.

Approvals **ARE** required for:

- The selection of color when the color is permanent to the material being applied to a building, and
- The application of paint to previously unpainted brick, stone, or masonry buildings.

For example: HARB approval is not required for the selection of a color to paint your wood porch; but, HARB approval is required for the selection of the color of shingles for your roof.

When it is time to paint, you can determine exactly which colors were applied to your building in the past and recreate them, or you can create new color schemes for your building.

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## General Guidelines

- Color can emphasize or de-emphasize architectural elements: darker colors recede and make your building look smaller, while brighter and lighter colors stand out and make your building look larger.
- Color can be used to tie all the parts of a building together.
- Many houses require only two colors of paint; houses with more detail may require three colors. Few houses are ornate enough to require more than three colors.
- Appreciate the natural color of unpainted masonry.
- Pick your colors in daylight.
- Building style, period of construction, materials, and setting contribute to the appropriate choice of paint color.



**Tip:** There are many color guides available that will help you choose the colors that are appropriate for house style. Contact the Borough office for assistance with this.

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### Why Your Building Won't "Hold Paint"

If you find yourself repainting your building more frequently than every 5 to 8 years, one of the following reasons may be to blame:

- There is too much moisture present.
- Your paint was applied under adverse conditions.
- Your paint was applied with inadequate surface preparation.
- There may be latex paint over oil base paints.

### Proper Conditions for Painting

#### Temperature And Weather

Weather conditions can dramatically affect your paint job. Paint should be applied when the temperature is between 50 and 90 degrees, and at relative humidity levels below 60%. Painting in direct sunlight can also ruin a paint job; it is best to paint in the shade. Always paint strictly according to the manufacturer's directions.

#### Surface Preparation

If excess moisture or weather conditions are not causing your paint to fail, your surface may not have been properly prepared. The surface must be clean and free of loose paint. Harsh or abrasive methods should never be used to clean the surface or to remove the paint. Such methods involve considerable risk because they can remove the outermost surface of the material, speeding future deterioration, and they can destroy delicate detailing.



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### **Tips for Preparing a Surface for Paint:**

Only paint a clean surface. Use household detergent, water, and a natural bristle brush.

After cleaning, always dry, treat, and prime all surfaces before repainting.

Wood that is too wet will not accept paint. Consider testing the moisture content of exposed wood and make sure that it is between 12% and 15%.

Wood that is very dry may not accept paint well. An application of boiled linseed oil, cut 50% with paint thinner or turpentine, can condition the surface for painting with an oil-base primer.

New cedar clapboards may require a light sanding prior to painting.

If preparation involves lead-based paint, call the National Lead Information Clearinghouse at 800-424-LEAD.