

CHAPTER 7

A. OVERVIEW

All buildings and structures within the City Point Historic District shall be preserved against decay and deterioration and maintained free from structural defects. In the occasional case where a building is to remain vacant as a temporary measure, certain precautions should be taken to ensure the protection of the structure until a suitable use is found. The most important threats to a vacant building are weather, pests and vandalism. Owners can protect against those dangers by adhering to the following guidelines. **If a structure will be vacant for more than two years please refer to Section D. Protective Maintenance.**

Certain deterioration of a building will be inevitable. Deterioration of a building's exterior most commonly includes the deterioration of the roof, windows, porches and paint finish, leading to additional deterioration. Damage to interior finishes can follow, with loss of paint, plaster, and floors. Maintaining the building enclosure is a small price to pay for the overall protection of a historic structure.

By securing your building to protect against the elements, also known as “mothballing”, you will protect your investment, lessen the need for more costly, extensive repairs when the building is put back into service, and prevent the building's total loss by natural or manmade forces. You will also save an important part of City Point's heritage --- of importance to the entire City of Hopewell and beyond. A mothballing checklist is presented on the following page.

The first step in the mothballing of any building is to develop a plan. Understanding why the building is being mothballed, and the features that need special protection, will help in this undertaking.

It is also helpful to establish a timeline for the period of vacancy, as **mothballing is only a temporary protective measure.** Identifying probable future uses of the structure can also help to adapt the mothballing process to this eventual outcome.



Securing a vacant building can help preserve the structure

B. CONDITION ISSUES

Building deterioration is caused by four major conditions that need to be addressed in order to properly mothball your building.

Moisture/Condensation

Moisture will cause the decay of original materials, leading to wood rot, growth of mold and fungi, and provide a hospitable environment for insects. Precipitation can gain direct access to the building through windows, doors, roof openings, damaged mortar joints, and ice dams.

It may also take the form of condensation caused by temperature and humidity shifts within the building. Improper drainage and uncontrolled vegetation can also contribute to moisture problems.

Extreme Weather Conditions

A single lightning strike during a thunderstorm can result in a fire that destroys a portion of or the entire structure. If building elements are not properly secured, the high winds that accompany tornadoes and hurricanes may remove or seriously damage many building elements and leave others open to further damage. Likewise, heavy rains may cause flooding on the lower levels of the building and water penetration in other unsecured areas.

Vandals

Not only is historic fabric destroyed when forced entry is made to a structure, but that opening then allows the direct entry of vermin, wind, and water. Vandals may also damage the interior, remove important interior architectural features, or start fires in the building.

Vermin

When birds, bugs, and rodents make a vacant building their home, it increases the likelihood of structural damage and compromises the integrity of decorative elements. New openings in the building may be made by these vermin. Birds' nests can be a fire hazard and their droppings, a disease threat. Rodents may chew on the building's wiring, and insects may bore into wood structural supports.

C. MOTHBALLING CHECKLIST

A systematic inspection of your building, employing the following checklist can help to prevent many of these conditions from exacting their toll on your investment:

Roof

- Repair all leaks.
- Make sure all flashing is secure.
- Allow air to flow under the roof if the building will remain heated.
- Make sure the soffit and eaves are vented.
- Place insulation on the floor of the attic rather than the underside of the roof.
- Inspect the roof after icy weather, and clear ice dams when possible.
- Provide routine roof maintenance during mothballing period.

**See *Preservation Brief #31*
Mothballing Historic Buildings**

Gutter Systems/Downspouts/Drainage

Observe the roof of the building during a hard rain to ensure that water runs off the roof and away from the building. Improperly functioning gutters may cause water damage to exterior wood trim.

- Reattach loose gutters.
- Repaint and repair gutters as needed.
- Ensure that water drains away from the building, and if necessary, mound dirt near the foundation to create a slope and cover with grass or straw.
- If the building does not have gutters, consider the installation of a metal drip edge or inexpensive aluminum gutters to keep water away from the building walls and foundation.

Ventilation

A securely ventilated building prevents the damage that can be caused by condensation. It can result in mildew, paint and plaster failure, warped woodwork, wood rot, nail popping, stress cracks, buckled floors, and dislodged ceiling tiles.

- Resolve any existing moisture problems before closing the building.
- Ventilate the building so that air enters at ground level and leaves at the attic level.
- Use louvers in half of the window surfaces to provide cross ventilation on each floor of the building.
- Louver basement windows fully.

- Add screens to crawl spaces to allow air movement around joists.
- Cross-ventilate attic spaces.

Windows and Doors

First floor entry points, such as windows and doors, should be secured to prevent damage and entry from vandals. Care should be taken during this process not to damage historic elements and finishes.

- Fit windows with locks.
- Install curtains or blinds to screen the interior from view and provide a lived-in appearance.
- Attach louvers/shutters or plywood across windows **from the interior**, while providing ventilation.
- Add screen to openings to prevent insect infiltration.
- Remove any debris, such as loose bricks, that could be thrown at the building to provide entry.
- Identify door to be used for interim access. Block other doors with heavy plywood and/or barricade from interior.
- Test locks and boarded-up windows to ensure that they are tamper-resistant.

Chimneys

- Make sure all chimneys are in good repair and that there are no loose bricks that may fall and create an avenue for moisture penetration.
- Install a securely ventilated chimney cap to protect against moisture and pests, while providing air flow.



Vegetation can damage the mortar of this chimney

Exterior Stability

Masonry

- Repoint masonry as needed to prevent moisture from entering the building.
- Pay particular attention to the ground level and the area around downspouts or if any loose bricks present a safety hazard.
- Follow guidelines for mortar as outlined in Chapter 4.

Frame

- Maintain sound layer of paint on previously painted buildings.
- Check for signs of insect damage, and treat for current activity.
- Repair or stabilize areas where rot is present.
- Block any unsecured openings.

D. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Heat

Without heat many of a building's interior finishes may fail, including paint and wallpaper. Buckling of floors and warping of other wood elements may also occur.

Plumbing

Plumbing in an unheated building should be protected by shutting off the water supply and draining the pipes, sprinkler systems, water heater, toilet, heating system, etc.

Decorative Elements

If safe storage can be provided elsewhere, it may be prudent to remove and store decorative items such as mantels and stained glass. Photograph the items in their original location before removal.

**See *Preservation Brief #24*
Heating, Ventilating, and Cooling Historic
Buildings Problems and Recommended
Approaches**

Monitoring and Ongoing Maintenance

- The mothballing process requires ongoing vigilance of the property. The more care that is taken on the upkeep of the building and its site, the less likely it is to suffer vandalism.
- If you live outside of Hopewell or City Point, provide a friend or neighbor in the City with a key and enlist their help in checking on the building after severe weather.
- Schedule regular maintenance checks like mowing, gutter cleaning, and roof repair.

Security Concerns

- Advise neighboring property owners that the building is vacant and ask that they advise you of any suspicious activity.
- Notify the appropriate local authorities of the vacant building, and provide keys to the police and fire departments.
- Post any definite plans for the building on a sign at the front of the building following guidelines for signs in the historic district.
- Consider installation of an alarm system.

Documentation

It may also be wise to document the “before” condition of the building as a guide for maintenance and for the rehabilitation of the building after mothballing.

E. PROTECTIVE MAINTENANCE
(Taken from Section W of Article XIV-B
of the City Zoning Ordinance)

1. All buildings and structures within the Historic District shall be preserved against decay and deterioration and maintained free from structural defects to the extent that such decay, deterioration or defects may, in the opinion of the review board, result in the irreparable deterioration of any exterior appurtenance or architectural features or produce a detrimental effect upon the character of the district as a whole or upon the life and character of the structure itself. The existence of any of the following conditions shall be sufficient to deem a structure an “endangered structure”:
 - a. The deterioration or ineffective waterproofing of exterior walls or other vertical supports, including broken windows and doors
 - b. The deterioration of roofs or horizontal members
 - c. The deterioration of exterior chimneys
 - d. The deterioration or crumbling of exterior plaster or mortar
 - e. The deterioration of any feature so as to create or permit the creation of any hazardous or unsafe condition or conditions
 - f. Defective lack of weather protection for exterior wall coverings, including lack of paint, or weathering due to lack of paint or other protective covering
2. Upon a determination by the review board (with the technical advice of the Building Code Official) that a structure constitutes an endangered structure in accordance with this section, the review board shall notify the zoning

administrator of such determination, and the zoning administrator shall give notice of the determination and the requirements of this section to the property owner as set forth herein. Within thirty (30) days of receipt of this notice, the owner shall commence the necessary stabilization repairs and the owner shall complete the repairs within one hundred-twenty (120) days of such notice. The zoning administrator shall notify the owner by Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested, of the endangered structure determination, and of the thirty (30) and one hundred-twenty (120) day time limitation set forth herein. Upon written notice to the zoning administrator within ten (10) days of receipt of the notice, an owner shall have a right to a hearing before the review board. Upon receipt of the owner’s notice, the zoning administrator shall promptly advise the owner of the time and location of the hearing and the right to present evidence and be represented by counsel. The hearing shall be informal and the decision of the review board shall be subject to the appeal in accordance with Section O of Article XIV-B. Tourist/Historic District, (TH-1), (Ord. 94-40). **See APPENDIX A for Article XIV-B in its entirety.**

3. The one hundred-twenty (120) day time limit for completion of the repairs as set forth in the preceding paragraph may be extended for thirty (30) day intervals on the discretion of the review board for good cause shown.
4. Enforcement of this section shall be in conformance with Article XXII (A) of this ordinance.
5. Violations of this section shall be punishable as set forth in Article XX (B) of this ordinance