

### Chapter 2

## BUILDING MATERIALS & FINISHES

### Characteristic Materials

Traditional masonry construction is characteristic of the majority of historic apartment and multifamily buildings. Brick and stone, with occasional concrete and stucco, provide both the medium of construction and the medium of expression of architectural style, façade composition and detail. Individually, and in context, the creative visual expression of the city's historic apartment buildings are arguably the single most important element in creating and defining the sense of place associated with Salt Lake City's older neighborhoods and inner urban areas. Their rich palette of traditional materials is the essential foundation of this expression.

Brick is the primary building material for the majority of historic apartment and multifamily buildings. This is usually combined with natural stone for parapets, gables, entrances, foundations, window sills and lintels, belt courses and other embellishments in the architectural composition. Concrete increasingly became an alternative to stone for particular elements and details as the twentieth century progressed. This palette provides a resilient construction medium which has inherently durable and energy management advantages in the extremes of the Utah climate.

Although requiring less regular maintenance, masonry is still vulnerable to deferred maintenance, which can expose the exterior of the building to water ingress and consequently also frost damage. The integrity of guttering and other water management elements, and the pointing of the masonry become important in maintaining the appearance, efficiency and longevity of a facade.

Painting the masonry should be avoided. Painting alters the architectural character, seals in moisture causing gradual damage to the walls and their thermal performance, and also builds in the recurring cost of periodic repainting. Where painting has been carried out in the past, and investment is available to strip the paint without damaging the masonry surface, the removal of paint is encouraged. It must be carried out with great care, however, to avoid permanent damage to the brickwork.

Wood was used for rear utility porches and screens, and for balcony construction and detailing, as well as window framing and doorways. While requiring periodic maintenance in terms of ensuring a sound paint surface, especially where exposed as decorative balcony construction and detailing, original or early wood will also be a very durable material. This close-grained, well seasoned old growth wood should be retained and repaired wherever possible. Its durability will significantly outperform any more recently harvested wood considered for replacement.

Iron and steel, and occasionally other metals, also play a role externally in various forms of decorative railing, balcony construction and fire escapes, and often as window framing. Again, although durable, periodic maintenance will be required to ensure a sound coat of paint. A more vulnerable relationship arises where a ferrous metal is set directly into stone or concrete, creating the potential for gradual rusting and expansion of the metal, and resultant fracturing or spalling of the masonry. Original metalwork should be retained wherever possible and repaired or reinstated if necessary. Systematic maintenance should ensure that it is unlikely to become a cause of deterioration of the building.

### Architectural Character

The palette of materials, their relationships, detailing and textures provide the basis of the design expression of the architectural composition. With a historic apartment building this is usually manifest in a symmetrical, sometimes asymmetrical, front façade. Although housing several residential units the architectural integrity of the apartment building will depend upon adopting a comprehensive approach to the entire façade. Treating building materials differently for one residential unit and not others will compromise the coherence of the design composition, and adversely affect the historic integrity of the building.

**2.1 Proposals for repair or alteration should be considered in the light of adopting a common and comprehensive approach to the design of the facade.**

### Principal Doorway

As a rule the main entrance of a historic apartment building is designed as a key focal point of the primary façade, and embellished with attention to proportions, the palette of materials, their relationships and their detailing. The contribution of the principal doorway will be a significant character-defining feature of a historic apartment building. It should be retained, or ideally repaired or reinstated if previously damaged, adversely altered or removed.

### Balconies

Balconies are a principal characteristic of virtually all early ‘walk up’ type apartment buildings and many ‘double-loaded corridor’ type apartments. They often create much of the street facing architectural character of the building and its stylistic identity.

Balconies are however a highly exposed element of the exterior façade. The materials and detailing therefore will require more frequent maintenance, and will consequently suffer more rapidly from deferred maintenance. A common approach to maintenance, repair or alteration will be required to ensure the integrity of the visual cohesion of the facade. Similarly, if replacement of any of the materials is unavoidable, they should be replaced to match the original wherever possible.

Classical orders of supporting columns and their details can be vulnerable to exposure, lack of maintenance or repairs, and should receive periodic attention.

### Roofline & Cornice Line

The roof materials are likely to be an element in the apparent character of particular architectural styles such as Tudor, Gothic and perhaps Spanish influences. A more complex roof form and steeper roof pitch will expose the roof treatment and materials. Similarly, materials characteristic of the style should be retained or if necessary replaced in kind. Care should be taken to ensure that a common approach is taken to the roofing materials which are a visible characteristic.

**See also:** [A Preservation Handbook for Historic Residential Properties & Districts in Salt Lake City, Ch.2 Building Materials & Finishes](#)

**See also:** A building with a flat or low pitched roof form set behind a parapet is less likely to be a feature of concern to the apparent character of the building. The parapet wall itself will be exposed to the elements of weather on both sides. A sound series of flashings, and coping or cap 'stone', as well as attention to repointing the masonry, will be essential to ensuring the weathertight performance, and the appearance of the building.

Cornice and eaves lines may be an important element in the design of the building and may be constructed from a range of materials, from masonry to wood and metal. Here, exposure and vulnerability, coupled with issues of access, prompt additional care to ensure they are maintained, and consequently retained.

**2.2 Original materials, their details and finishes, should be retained and where necessary repaired.**

**2.3 If the element is beyond repair, then limited replacement in matching materials, detail and texture or finish should be accomplished, to ensure the visual integrity of the original composition.**



*Clay roofing tile as a visible characteristic.*

### Utility Porches, Screens and Rear Escapes

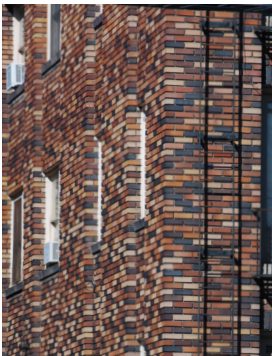
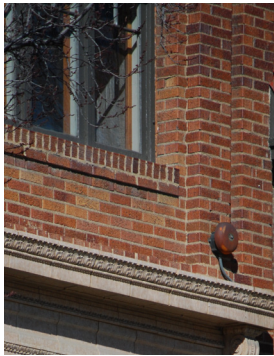
As an original part of many early apartment buildings, the utility porch should be retained and repaired. Although characteristically of wood, this section of the building was likely to be initially well constructed, and if adequately maintained, should endure the life of the building. The quality of the original wood is likely to be high and will perform well if paintwork is sound. Usually situated to the rear of the building, and visible along the side facades from the street frontage, often this section of the building can suffer from inadequate maintenance and premature deterioration. The utility porch is also an area where there is major scope for creating more usable space within the building through additional insulation and enhanced energy efficiency.

**2.4 As an original part of many early apartment buildings, the utility porch should be retained and repaired.**

### Maintenance and Repair

The materials of an early apartment building will perform as they should if they are understood and maintained. Identifying and avoiding sources of water are fundamental to both the appearance and the survival of the building and its materials. Managing rainwater goods to avoid leaks and channeling water away from the building, avoiding associated freeze-thaw deterioration and damage from leached salts, maintaining sound pointing which is not harder than the brick or stonework, caulking and maintaining a sound paint finish, ensuring sound flashings where they occur, and carrying out minor repairs as required, should ensure the integrity of the original range of materials and their continued performance and role in the expression of the architectural character of the building.





MATERIALS