Check out our webpage!

The City of Rock Hill has developed a webpage specifically to provide resources for owners of historic properties. If you haven't seen it before, go to www.cityofrockhill.com/historic and see what information is available online, all on one convenient webpage:

Cyclical Home Maintenance – A Short Guide to Preserving and Maintaining Your Historic Investment
Spring is here and everyone's thoughts turn to – home maintenance. Probably not, but home maintenance is something that everyone can relate to, whether you own an historic house or a newly built home. Every homeowner knows that maintenance can be a real pain; there's always something that needs to be taken care of and usually, has to be done right then. There's the weekly lawn mowing and trimming, the monthly change of the HVAC air filters, the quarterly clearing of the dryer vent, and the annual gutter cleaning.

And based on the list above, the first item is done regularly, the second one not so much, the third one never thought of, and the fourth only when absolutely positively unavoidable.

If you've ever heard the riddle, "How do you eat an entire elephant?", home maintenance can appear to many as being the same thing, a huge and unimaginable task. But the answer to the riddle – "One piece at a time" – is the best way to handle it. By breaking down each task into a manageable "bite", you may discover that you can handle the majority of the work yourself and only contract out a small part – which can mean huge savings. Additionally, having a consistent maintenance record may help you sell your house in the future since it will give potential buyers insight into how well you've kept up with the basics and in planning for future major repairs.

The first plan of action is to do an overall assessment of your home, both inside and out. This will take the most time, but you will only need to do it once. Take the "eating an elephant" approach one step further and decide that for three hours every Saturday morning, you will do an assessment of one area. This will make the task much more manageable – whether you live in a two-story, 3600 square foot 1890's home, or a one-story 1600 square foot 1980's home, you want to make this process as manageable as possible and still be able to have some of the weekend available for fun.

Document, document, document! Write down everything you see. Noticing a small crack in a brick pier? Take a photo, make some measurements, and write it down – then make a note to check on it within the next six months. A sample Inspection Assessment form is included to help guide you with documentation.

Become as familiar with the inside and outside of your home as you can, because the more you know about it, the quicker you can address issues - which could also equal a significant amount of savings in the long run. Well-maintained buildings tend to be less expensive to repair and are not as susceptible to severe damage as ones that have been neglected.

The National Park Service Preservation Brief 47: Maintaining the Exterior of Small and Medium Size Historic Buildings, written by Sharon C. Park, FAIA, is a great source for detailed information about home maintenance and is available online at www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm. There are a wide variety of topics dealing specifically with historic properties, but many of the briefs have information that could apply to any home.

Performing the Assessment

Besides the checklist, things you will need to have with you as you do the assessment include a camera, pencil, paper, tape measure, screwdriver (Phillips and flathead), binoculars, ladder, paint scraper, and a partner to help make the process go faster and to provide you with help. Never put yourself in a position where you feel in danger while doing the assessment – if you don't like climbing ladders, don't climb the ladder. And while you are encouraged to do an assessment of a particular area during rainfall, never do this during a thunderstorm or significant weather event – your life is more important. Take every precaution to protect yourself from harm while doing this assessment. You may also want to consider investing in having a professional home inspector do the initial assessment for you.

Start at the front door and work your way around the entire perimeter, ending at the same place. Take photos – lots and lots of photos, including ones from 50 feet away, 25 feet away, 5 feet away, and 5 inches away. If you are doing the assessment following rain, take a look at where the water is draining to, both from the ground level and the roof. Make note of any areas that are particularly wet and come back to that spot several days later to make sure that water is draining away from the foundation. And as messy as it will be, go outside during the next rainfall and check for issues. Dark spots anywhere along the foundation, wood siding, windows, corners, joints – anywhere – can indicate water is coming from somewhere and causing issues, such as rotting, mold, or termite damage. The most important thing to remember is to check for water damage frequently, mainly after a significant rainfall and at the start of each season.

Entry Doors:

Look for signs of wear at the top and bottom of the door and the door frame. Check the condition of the doorknob, knocker, and hinges. If the hinges are loose, for example, this might cause the door to sag and rub against the bottom of the door frame. Loose doorknobs can create a security issue by not allowing the doors to lock correctly.

Porch Ceiling:

Water infiltration and damage is a big concern as water tends to seek the path of least resistance. One of the first signs of water damage is peeling paint, especially if you note it in one particular area of the ceiling and nowhere else. Sagging ceilings and dark spots are another indication. Also check for birds and insects nests, especially at the tops of columns. It's a good idea to go ahead and leave the bird nests alone until fall, then clean the area and apply something that will keep the birds from nesting each year, such as a plastic hawk, owl or crow, or even small mirrors. Insect nests should be dealt with immediately, especially if you find holes created by carpenter bees. Information about dealing with carpenter bees can be found online at http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PDF/PESTNOTES/pncarpenterbees.pdf

Porch Floor:
Check for any loose or damaged flooring sections. Damage can include rotting from water infiltration, termite damage, or warping. Replace damaged boards as soon as possible – once one board is damaged, it doesn't take long for the damage to spread to surrounding areas.

Windows:
Look for water damage and loose boards along the sill, broken glass, cracked or missing glazing compound around the edge of the glass, and termite/insect damage. From the inside, check to make sure the window sashes operate correctly, if the windows are not painted shut. If the sashes are difficult to move, simple repairs can be done to make sure that they work like new. There are a number of sources available for repairing windows, including the YouTube video series, "Simple Steps to Working Windows" found online at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUSGILSfzwE. This link is also available online at www.cityofrockhill.com/historic. You might also consider installing interior storm windows for added energy efficiency.

Siding:
Check for loose or missing boards and water damage, especially towards the bottom of the wall at the foundation area. Look at the overall condition of the paint. If your building has been painted recently and you notice peeling areas, this could be a water issue and should be looked at during the next rainfall.

Foundation:
Look for any cracks in the foundation as well as for any areas that show rain washout exposing dirt around the foundation. Measure the cracks and Check for moss, algae, discoloration, and material deterioration, such as loose mortar, cracked or broken bricks, or bricks that appear to be dissolving.

Roofing/Chimneys:
Most times you can do this inspection from the ground using binoculars. Look for any discoloration around chimneys and vent pipes, missing shingles, and missing or damaged flashing. Check to make sure the chimney(s) are not leaning, and look for missing bricks or mortar. You may want to consider a chimney sweep service for cleaning services if this has not been done in a while. Any up close inspections should be done by a professional home inspector or roofing contractor.

Gutters:
Exterior gutters should be checked and cleaned, preferably following leaf fall especially if you have large trees surrounding the building.

Interior Walls/Ceilings/Floors:
Look for cracks, bubbles, discoloration, soft areas, and stains that might indicate water issues, especially around top floor ceilings as well as around sinks, toilets, and bathtubs.

Attic:
Check for water leaks, compacted insulation, light infiltration from roof area, and nests.

Basement/Crawlspace:
Look for any wet areas or standing water, foundation cracks, evidence of animals, and termite damage.

Mechanical Systems/Appliances:
Check and change HVAC system filters regularly. Clean filters help your system run more efficiently and helps in keeping maintenance costs down. Take the time to check the area around your appliances for any leaks or dust that might keep them from running efficiently, especially the refrigerator.

While doing this assessment, you might also look at ways of improving energy efficiency. Check Technical Preservation Brief 3: Improving Energy Efficiency in Historic Buildings.

This chart comes directly from Technical Preservation Brief 47: Maintaining the Exterior of Small and Medium Size Historic Buildings by Sharon C. Park, FAIA.

INSPECTION FREQUENCY CHART		
AREA	**MINIMUM FREQUENCY**	**SEASON**
Roof	Annually	Spring or Fall; every 5 years by roofer
Chimneys	Annually	Fall, prior to heating season; every 5 years by mason
Roof Drainage	6 months; more frequently during rainy seasons	Before and after wet season, during heavy rain
Exterior Walls and Porches	Annually	Spring, prior to summer/fall painting season
Windows	Annually	Spring, prior to summer/fall painting season
Foundation and Grade	Annually	Spring or during wet season
Building Perimeter	Annually	Winter, after leaves have dropped off trees
Entryways	Annually; heavily used entries may merit greater frequency	Spring, prior to summer/fall painting season
Doors	6 months; heavily used entry doors may merit greater frequency	Spring and fall; prior to heating/cooling seasons
Attic	4 months, or after or a major storm	Before, during and after wet season
Basement/Crawlspace	4 months, or after a major storm	Before, during and after wet season

The Inspection Assessment Form included is a suggested format – adapt it to meet your own needs or print out as many copies as you want! Don't forget to attach photos.

INSPECTION ASSESSMENT FORM			
Location/Building Feature:			
Materials of Construction:			
Initial Date of Inspection:			
Date	Condition of Feature (Good, Fair, Poor, Immediate Attention Needed)	Maintenance Required/Issues Noted (include contractor's information if follow up is necessary)	Date to Recheck Condition or Date Work Completed