

# Repair or Demolish?

**Protecting the investment  
in your older home**

**NATIONAL  
TRUST  
FOR  
HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION®**

Owners of flood-damaged historic homes are discovering that it can be faster and cheaper to renovate than to demolish and build a new house.

Not only can renovation save money today, but a rehabbed historic home is more valuable in the long run than a new house. It's just too expensive today to duplicate the way craftsman built the homes that make our neighborhoods so special.

If your house is more than 40 years old and in a historic neighborhood, there are real advantages to repairing it and moving back home.



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

## **Why should I repair my old house when I can just tear it down and build something brand new?**

- The materials in your home are probably tougher than what's available today. Your home has weathered storms and lots of wear and tear - proof of its strength.
- The workmanship in your home might be a thing of the past, at least for affordable houses. Plaster, molding, mantels, and other historic features are very expensive to produce today.
- Well-maintained old homes in historic neighborhoods grow in value more than new construction.
- Think about what makes your home special. Would a new house be out of place in your neighborhood and hard to sell in the future?
- Look around. Nothing improves a block's desirability more than a renovated home!
- If you live in a qualified historic district, you may have special financial incentives to repair your family home. Call the State Historic Preservation Office.

## **How do I know if my home can even be saved?**

- Get help from specialists in older buildings. The Iowa Historic Preservation Alliance and the State Historic Preservation Office can help you find qualified specialists.
- Check the foundation, the roof, and the interior framing and structure. Much damage can be repaired.
- Buckled floor boards can be replaced, and it usually isn't necessary to install a new floor.
- Damaged wood anywhere in your home can be repaired or replaced.
- Mold usually doesn't feed on plain plaster and can be treated with solutions. Plaster does not always need to be removed. The National Trust has a free publication to help you deal with flood damage and mold, available online at [www.PreservationNation.org](http://www.PreservationNation.org) and at BruceMore, disaster relief centers, and community meetings.
- Moldy sheetrock needs to be cut and removed. Treat the framing behind with a solution and let it dry.
- Wooden windows and doors and boards simply need to be cleaned, not thrown away. Save lots of money and keep your home's solid structure by following guidelines. Don't gut the house.

## Won't it cost less just to tear it down and build a modern house? How do I figure out the costs?

- It usually costs less to repair than build from scratch. It's quicker, and a repaired historic home grows in value faster than a new building.
- Talk to architects and contractors experienced in rehabbing older homes. The Iowa Historic Preservation Alliance and the State Historic Preservation Office can help you find qualified specialists.
- Figure out exactly what needs to be done, write it down, and walk through your house with contractors to get a ballpark figure. If the estimate sounds reasonable, request an item by item detailed bid. Try and get three bids based on the exact same work. Verify the contractor's state license number and insurance.



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

## What if I decide not to repair my home?

- Instead of tearing it down, think about selling your older home. There may be someone looking for a fixer-upper in your historic neighborhood.
- Tearing down your home and leaving a vacant lot in its place is a sure way to lose your investment. Vacant lots bring down the value of the neighborhood.



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

For more information, contact:

**State Historical Society of Iowa**  
State Historic Preservation Office  
515-281-8743  
[www.iowahistory.org/preservation](http://www.iowahistory.org/preservation)

**Iowa Historic Preservation Alliance**  
17718 120th Street  
Anamosa, Iowa 52205  
[www.iowapreservation.org](http://www.iowapreservation.org)  
[info@iowapreservation.org](mailto:info@iowapreservation.org)

**National Trust for Historic Preservation Midwest Office**  
53 W. Jackson Blvd., Ste. 350  
Chicago, IL 60604  
312-939-5547  
[www.preservationnation.org](http://www.preservationnation.org)  
[mwro@nthp.org](mailto:mwro@nthp.org)