

At the City of Mount Vernon website there is a document from the Architectural Review Board titled "Applications to Change Roofing From Traditional Materials" (<https://cmvny.com/DocumentCenter/View/469/Roof-Changing-Rules-PDF>)

The first 2 paragraphs of the document provide the rationale for requiring residents to apply for and receive ARB approval when seeking to replace a roof constructed with "traditional" materials (such as slate or tile), with one constructed with a more common and affordable material, such as asphalt shingles. In order to evaluate the ARB rationale, I critique each sentence of the 2 paragraphs one at a time. I assess whether the content of each statement expresses an idea that is "Probably Accurate", "Possibly Accurate" (but lacks evidence), or "Speculative" in nature. Prior to my assessment I consulted with an architect and looked for evidence to support statements for which I believe it is need. My comments are in [blue](#).

Roof replacements that change a roof's original or traditional materials (such as slate or tile) to less expensive substitutes (such as asphalt) are generally considered to detract from the architectural style and character of the affected structure.	Speculative	<b>Possibly Accurate (but lacks evidence)</b>	Probably Accurate
<a href="#">This statement is overly broad. For example, replacing a red terracotta-clay tile roof on a Mediterranean-style home with a grey asphalt shingle roof may have a significant impact on the the look of the home and may detract from the architectural style and character of that home. However, replacing a grey slate roof on a Colonial-style home with a grey asphalt shingle roof will have only a minimal visual impact on the look of the home and therefore is unlikely to detract from the architectural style and character of that home.</a>			
Such changes are particularly disfavored when the materials sought to be replaced are characteristic of the type, style or vernacular of the affected structure or typical for the surrounding neighborhood.	Speculative	<b>Possibly Accurate (but lacks evidence)</b>	Probably Accurate
<a href="#">On what evidence is this statement based? In a neighborhood of Mediterranean-style homes, all with roofs made of red terracotta-clay, if one home-owner replaced their roof with grey asphalt shingles it might be "particularly disfavored" by surrounding neighbors, but it might not be. Furthermore, as noted above, changing from grey slate to grey asphalt shingle is far less perceptible to the casual observe. As a matter of fact, I would argue that neighbors should not be more than casual observers of each others roofing materials .</a>			
While no single building alteration will in itself normally have a major effect on the overall visual attractiveness and appeal of the surrounding neighborhood, every down-grade serves as a precedent for others to follow and can lead to piecemeal degradations of the neighborhood spaces that all city residents live in and share.	<b>Speculative</b>	<b>Possibly Accurate (but lacks evidence)</b>	Probably Accurate

Basically, what the ARB is saying is "If we allow this, what's next?". This is problematic for several reasons, the most obviously being that the ARB is not a Historical Preservation Society. In addition, it is thoroughly unneighborly. The questions are these: 1) Is changing from a slate to asphalt roof a "degradation" of the neighborhood? If so, prove it. 2) Is there evidence that once a neighbor changes roofing materials from original material such as slate, to asphalt shingles, is that neighbor or other neighbors more likely to engage in "piecemeal degradations" of their property? If there is evidence to support this the ARB should present it. If not, the ARB shouldn't make statements that it cannot support with evidence.

To preserve the visual quality of Mount Vernon's neighborhoods and, where possible, to improve or restore it, and to maintain the property values of existing owners and the quality of life that those values reflect, even seemingly minor down-grades are disfavored.

**Speculative**

Possibly Accurate (but lacks evidence)

Probably Accurate

If there is evidence to support the claim that the materials used on my neighbors roof impacts the value of my home, the ARB should present it. And I'm not even sure what to say regarding the claimed "visual quality" of life neighborhoods derive from roofing materials. That's just bizarre. They are roofs. Their job is to keep the elements out and not blow off. To any neighbors oggling my roof, please quit it.

Often a roof's original or traditional materials may seem to be failing when, in fact, the problems lie only or mostly at edges or at joints or flashing areas where larger fields of roofing come together.

**Speculative**

Possibly Accurate (but lacks evidence)

Probably Accurate

How often is this the problem? Since the ARB is quite nitpicky when it comes to what materials homeowners can and cannot use in the maintenance of their private property, the ARB should be prepared to support their claims with references to actual data, preferably data from refereed scientific journals.

In these situations, the existing traditional roof can normally be repaired to effectively shed water at a cost that is less than the cost of totally replacing it with cheaper materials.

Speculative

Possibly Accurate (but lacks evidence)

**Probably Accurate**

This is probably true, but it is an individual determination made by the homeowner in consultation with their roofing professional.

Persons who are in the business of selling replacement roof materials are often unwilling or unable to make the necessary evaluation of roofs made of tile or slate.

**Speculative**

Possibly Accurate (but lacks evidence)

Probably Accurate

How often is this happening? This claim should be supported with evidence.

My Conclusion: the claims made by the ARB to justify their position regarding the replacement of traditional roofing materials lacks good evidentiary support and should be abandoned.