

Culminating Activity: Mock Board of Architectural Review Meeting

Directions: Read through the following narrative that will explain exactly what your group will be presenting to the Board of Architectural Review at the mock meeting. Then, follow the next set of directions.

Board of Architectural Review

As members of the Board of Architectural Review, you will be responsible for presiding over the meeting. Your teacher will help you guide the order of the meeting, but you have the important role of coming to a final decision to either approve or deny the two proposals that will be presented.

The Board of Architectural Review (BAR) was established in 1931. It is a group of seven volunteer members who are assisted by the City of Charleston's Urban Design and Preservation Division. The BAR is primarily concerned with reviewing all exterior alterations to buildings located in the Old City District (map of historic district). Therefore, all developers and residents owning property in the Old City District must present any changes they wish to make to the outside of the property to the BAR. Without the BAR's approval, exterior alterations cannot be carried out.

The agenda for the BAR meeting you will be presiding over is outlined below.

AGENDA

BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

- 1. 15 Harbor Street** **Application No. 103-10-1**
Request approval for removal of the historic wood six over six double-hung sash windows to be replaced with new vinyl one over one single-hung sash windows.
Rhettborough, Old City District c. 1847
- 2. 202 Main Street** **Application No. 103-10-2**
Request approval for a right angle neon sign to be added to the building's façade.

While your group may not be presenting proposals exactly like the Homeowner and Business Owner groups, you will be required to speak during the meeting in response to each proposal. When the BAR members are asked to voice their opinions, you will be responsible for bringing up any problems you see with the proposals that could have negative effects on the historic buildings or go against any design or zoning regulations.

The following will help you prepare for your role in the meeting by providing you with information about the properties listed on the BAR agenda as well as preservation issues relating to each:

1. 15 Harbor Street

- a. This property was constructed in 1847 and is located in the Rhettsborough neighborhood in the Old City District.
- b. This proposal is requesting approval for the removal of historic wooden windows that are original to the house in favor of installing new vinyl windows.
- c. A double-hung window is constructed of two parts (sashes) that overlap slightly and slide up and down inside the frame. With a single-hung sash window, only one of the sashes move up and down.
 - i. On this particular house, each sash includes six panes of glass. This is why the window is described “six over six.”
 - ii. The homeowner is proposing that the six over six double-hung sash windows be removed and replaced by one over one single-hung sash windows.
 - iii. This would mean each sash would have one large pan of glass rather than being divided into six panes.

- d. The Technical Preservation Services under the National Park Service have put together informational briefs on appropriate preservation techniques online in order to make historic preservation information more accessible to the public.
 - i. According to Preservation Brief 9: The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows:
 - 1. Historic windows should only be replaced when absolutely necessary.
 - 2. It is more practical to repair existing wooden windows than replace them.
 - 3. Wooden windows that are properly maintained will last a long time.
 - 4. Windows that are original to a building greatly contribute to its historic significance and character.¹
 - ii. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that original historic windows should be retained unless they are deteriorated beyond the point of repair.
- e. Additionally, removing original wood windows in favor of vinyl windows is an inappropriate preservation technique. If the wood windows have deteriorated beyond repair, any replacement should be sensitive to the original building material and be made of wood *not* vinyl.
- f. And, if possible, the same six over six design should be preserved rather than a one over one window in order to maintain the original look and design of the house.
- g. From the outside, the look of a double-hung window versus a single-hung window is not a large difference, but again, if the window was historically a double-hung window, then efforts should be made to make any new additions double-hung as well.

¹ Technical Preservation Services, "Preservation Brief 9: The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows," National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/history/HPS/tps/briefs/brief09.htm#Window%20Replacement> (accessed March 5, 2010).

- h. See Figures 6-12 and 6-13 for a photograph of 15 Harbor Street as well as a photographic example of vinyl one over one single-hung sash windows the owners are proposing to replace the historic windows with.

Fig. 6.12 15 Harbor Street. Photograph by author. 3 Mar. 2010.



Fig. 6.13 Example of vinyl one over one single-hung sash windows. Energy Star Vinyl Window Toronto <http://www.vinylwindow-toronto.com/products> (accessed March 5, 2010).



2. 202 Main Street

- a. This property was constructed around 1840 and is located on Main Street which houses a large portion of Charleston's commercial businesses.
- b. This proposal requests permission to construct a right angle neon sign on the façade (front of the building) of the existing three-story structure.
- i. The primary concern with this proposal is that a right angle *neon* sign is not permissible under the City of Charleston's Zoning Ordinance.
 - ii. Sec. 54-413. Regulations for signs within the Commercial Transitional, CT District states:
 1. "Right Angle Signs: One right angle sign shall be permitted per business unit as follows:
 - a. Right angle signs shall not exceed nine (9) square feet per face.

b. On a single façade, right angle signs are not permitted in conjunction with façade signs.

c. *Right angle signs are not to be illuminated.*²

c. See Figures 6-14 and 6-15 for a photograph of 202 Main Street and an example of an existing right angle neon sign at Tellis Pharmacy on Main Street in Charleston.

Fig. 6.14 202 Main Street. Photograph by author. 3 Mar. 2010.



Fig. 6.15 Close-up of right angle neon Tellis Pharmacy sign. Photograph by author 3 Mar. 2010.



Final Directions:

1. Use the information listed above to help you make your decision on whether to approve or deny each proposal.

² City of Charleston, South Carolina Zoning Ordinances, “Article 4, Part 3, Section 54-3413: Regulations for signs within the Commercial Transitional, CT District,” http://library6.municode.com/default-test/home.htm?infobase=14049&doc_action=whatsnew (accessed March 5, 2010).

2. Each member of your group will be asked to speak, so it might be helpful to have group members establish who is going to say what before the meeting begins so there will not be any confusion.
3. You will want to ask the members of the Homeowner and Business Owner groups questions regarding their proposals. You may use the following questions and/or create your own for the meeting:
 - a. Homeowner Group:
 - i. Why do you want to do this project?
 - ii. When was your building constructed?
 - iii. Are the existing windows original to the house? Why do you want to change them?
 - ii. How will the removal of the original windows affect the value of your house?
 - iii. Are you taking the necessary precautions to protect the elements that make the building historically significant?
 - a. Business Owner Group:
 - i. Why do you want to do this project?
 - ii. When was your house constructed?
 - iii. Why is it necessary for you to add a neon sign to your storefront?
 - iv. How will the new sign affect the overall appearance of Main Street?
 - iv. Are you taking the necessary precautions to protect the elements that make the building historically significant?
1. Feel free to write down the information on note cards so you will be prepared.